

THE COSTCO CONNECTION

April 2011 • Volume 26 • Number 4

A lifestyle magazine for
Costco members

Howard Schultz,
CEO of Starbucks

Starbucks at forty

The coffee
company sees
its best years
ahead 30

ALSO: Hire now? 25 • Real estate update 27 • Jean Auel's clan 57 • Roses! 82

THE COSTCO CONNECTION



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The Costco Way 2010*

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- To the left there is a tab called "Resources." Here's where Costco members will find information that they will likely refer to often, such as the [Kirkland Signature Wine Connection](#), all of the *Costco Way* cookbooks (also on right), location guides for [Gas Stations](#) and [Business Centers](#), and a beginners guide to [digital photos](#).



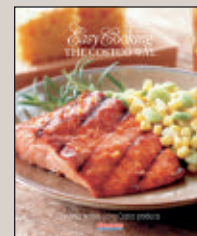
Home Cooking



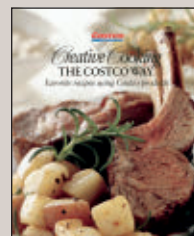
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BRIAN SMALE

COVER STORY

Howard Schultz speaks candidly about the rise, fall and rise of Starbucks, and what he's learned along the way

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Unfiltered

By Tim Talevich



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from the publisher's desk

Ginnie Roeglin

WE ARE PLEASED to feature Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks, on our cover this month. Starbucks is a Seattle neighbor and long-term partner of Costco. Our two companies have grown up together and have become icons in our respective industries.

Like many large companies, Starbucks has struggled in recent years. After a meteoric rise and global expansion that made Starbucks a daily stop for millions of coffee lovers, the company found its business faltering. Schultz returned to the helm as CEO to turn Starbucks around, and the company now seems to be back on track. Business leaders everywhere can learn a powerful lesson from Starbucks' journey, as told by Schultz in his new book, *Onward*, and in our cover story, starting on page 30. We congratulate Starbucks on their 40th anniversary in business.

Many of us start looking forward to the summer travel season around this time of year. If you are planning a road trip, be sure your tires are safe, as worn-out or under-inflated tires are a major cause of traffic accidents. Recommendations for tire safety are on page 71, and if you need new tires, just visit a Costco Tire Center for replacements.

Costco Travel can help you plan a great vacation this summer with a selection of cruises, vacation packages and savings on hotels. Our hotel-only program (page 77) includes top locations from Hyatt and Best Western, including luxury and more affordable options.

To help you research a destination or prepare for a trip, our book buyers have stocked the warehouses with various travel guides, books and DVDs. You'll find examples on pages 48 through 50. They've also included a selection of beach reads and audiobooks.

Cut flowers always help to bring the outdoors in at this time of year. We offer an inside look at Costco's sustainable Rainforest Alliance roses on page 82. Not only are you supporting ecosystem conservation and fair worker practices when you buy these blooms, but you could save up to a dollar per stem on roses at Costco.

Best wishes for your Passover and Easter celebrations this month from all of us at Costco! ☺



Ginnie Roeglin is Senior Vice President, E-Commerce and Publishing, and Publisher of *The Costco Connection*.

from the editor's desk

David W. Fuller

THERE IS SOMETHING quintessentially American about a comeback story.

Not that tales of resurgence are uniquely American. They do speak to the essential human reluctance to give in to circumstances. But American history, lore and consciousness has always relished the Andre Agassis, the Tina Turners, the Steve Jobses and the Jerry Browns of the world.

This month we look at the great corporate comeback story taking place at Starbucks, a company that experienced an ebullient youth and a wide-ranging adolescence, a company now remaking itself at age 40.

What is so compelling about such a story? As he resumed the role of CEO after an eight-year hiatus, Howard Schultz, the very personification of Starbucks, not just its CEO, noted, "We have to find and bring the soul of our company back, find our voice." There, in a nutshell, is the attraction of the comeback story: the reemphasis on original motivations; the rededication to principles and practices forged in an earlier, perhaps more innocent time, a time often remembered—rightly or wrongly—as simpler and more emotionally fulfilling.

Sports stars can lose their way through too much adulation, entertainers through the blinding forces of fame, corporations through sheer size and the seeming necessities of bureaucracy. In each of these types of cases it usually takes the deepest soul searching, often after hitting or nearing a nadir, to attempt a comeback, followed by the severest discipline and focus to run back up the stairs of success.

I salute Howard Schultz and all the others who have shown us that the path to a brighter future sometimes can be lit by the very people who led us to the path in the first place. ☺



David W. Fuller is Assistant Vice President, Publishing, and Editor of *The Costco Connection*.

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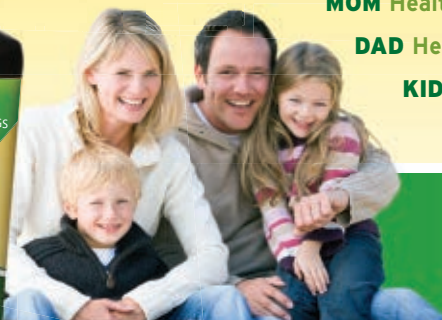
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Debate goes on

In response to the March Debate, "Is offshore oil drilling in the best interest of the United States?"

YES. We need to become independent of foreign oil sources. Until domestic sources are tapped, offshore drilling remains a viable alternative.

*Leslie Gifford
Durham, Oregon*

NO. The United States sits on 3 percent of the world's oil reserves and uses 25 percent. You could put an oil well in every front yard in America and still not make up that deficit! There are only two choices: Continue to buy foreign oil or use less.

*Sheri Thompson
Bountiful, Utah*

Member comments

Weddings and beyond

Your article highlighting the possibilities for weddings ["From shopping aisle to wedding aisle," March 2011] brought back great memories for me.

Our daughter was married two and a half years ago. Our son-in-law purchased the rings at Costco. The flowers we found were amazing. We purchased all of the food for the reception, from mixed nuts to the main course. We saved quite a bit getting our paper products too.

I don't usually keep the issue, but this one I will tuck away because we have three more daughters and a son who will marry eventually as well. It will be a great help to remember all that Costco has available.

*Ann Greenhouse
Lancaster, California*

Body of work

As a six-plus-year breast cancer survivor, I have been increasingly concerned about the chemicals and dyes in our personal-care products. I was thrilled when I read about Costco developing these [chemical- and dye-free] items because of your high standards ["Bathing beauty," March 2011].

BLOGS and tweets

Connection comments from off the network

"Great new article on autoimmune diseases in the March edition of *The Costco Connection* magazine!" *Tweeted by AARDATweets*

"Check out *The Costco Connection* magazine article on weddings. They have a lot of ideas and stories about brides." *Tweeted by LCarlson1*

"Just read the March 2011 issue of *The Costco Connection* magazine now out. See that 7 Frederic Fekkai haircare SKUs are now available there." *Tweeted by BSBmag*

"*Costco Connection*: young entrepreneurs share their success!!!! ["Where are they now?" March 2011]" *Tweeted by JAlayyan*

"I was thrilled to hear ... that Costco is trying to make it easier for its customers to know that the seafood they buy in its stores was fished in a manner that has the future in mind ["Net gain," *Buying Smart*, February 2011]. [The] company has taken steps to update its seafood and sustainability policy." *Blogged at SmartPlanet*

I got my copy of *The Costco Connection* on Saturday, read it on Sunday and shopped on Monday, filling my cart with shampoo, conditioner, body wash and dishwashing soap. I am not disappointed. I love everything I bought. Thank you for developing such a fabulous group of personal-care products.

*Karen Adams
Fredericksburg, Virginia*

Inside scoop

Thank you for including the article regarding the movie *Inside Job* ["Inside job," March 2011]. I have been actively working on the personal end of this mess, trying to help the victims of the mortgage fraud, foreclosures and short sales caused by the bankers. It permeated to the lowest rung of the financial ladder, including mortgage brokers and bank employees who would doctor credit applications in any way required to get a loan through, even when they knew the buyer could never afford the ultimate payments.

I urge everyone who cares about our country to buy or rent *Inside Job*.

*Ken Koenen
Paso Robles, California*

Whites and mites

The article in the March issue, "Solving the laundry quandary," failed to mention the most important reason for using hot water to wash bedding—it's the only way to kill dust mites that inhabit every bedroom.

I have found another way to make white clothes washed in warm water really white: by adding one-third to one-half cup of bleach (depending on the size of the load) to the wash after it starts running with the detergent in it, then stopping the machine a minute later. Restarting the machine three to five hours later will produce really white clothes with no damage to the material.

*Haig Chekenian
Smithtown, New York*

Hard cell

Mr. Horowitz missed two very important tips with respect to cell phone fraud ["Avoiding cell phone scams," March 2011].

First, password-protect the phone and the SIM card with a good, non-guessable PIN. In most cases there is no simple way to break the PIN. For example, on Windows phones, the interval between password attempts increases with each try, so the only realistic option is to wipe the phone if the password is not available.

Second, learn if it's possible and how to "wipe" a lost phone remotely using your service provider or a third-party app. Being able to quickly "brick" your phone before it's accessed after it's lost or stolen can save a lot of grief.

*Beverly Howard
Austin, Texas*

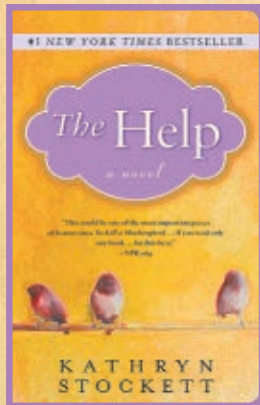
CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Monthly reader survey



WHAT DO YOU think of this issue of *The Connection*? Tell us and you could win a \$100 Costco Cash card! Take a moment to complete our anonymous reader feedback survey by going to Costco.com and searching "Costco Connection Magazine." Click "Reader Survey" on the welcome page. Upon completion, you will have the option to enter the drawing. **The February winner is Joseph Whittaker of Oxnard, California.**

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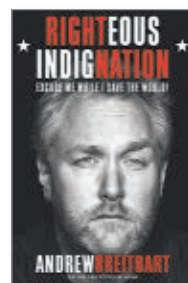
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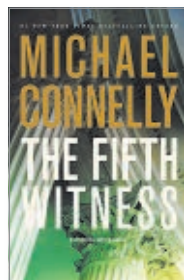
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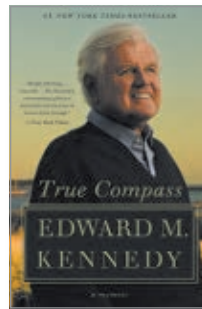
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DIALOGUEletters

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

The lowdown on hiring

Regarding the article on growing your business ["Hire learning" February 2011], I was encouraged to see the offer for a free copy of *Hire Your First Employee*, Rhonda Abrams' newest book, put together by teamwork between Costco and Intuit. However, it seems that somebody didn't do their homework. What is really offered are some highlights from the 192-page book by Ms. Abrams, not the book as your article indicates.

Dave Turk
Cutler, California

Rhonda Abrams responds: If you go to www.costcopayroll.com/rhonda and fill out the form, you get my full, printed book—Hire Your First Employee—mailed to you absolutely free, thanks to Costco and Intuit. Because it takes about two weeks for the book to arrive, you can also click on the mini-guide and download the highlights instantaneously.

We want to help you hire—and hire well—so that your business grows and you succeed. I hope you find the book helpful.



THE CONNECTION is available each month in a digital replica *Online Edition*. Many members have opted to drop the print edition and receive only the *Online Edition*. This convenient option reduces paper and ink consumption, and cuts freight and postage expense.

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Kudos to *The Connection*

I felt the need to tell someone at *The Costco Connection* that I love this magazine! I'm always shocked at how well done it is, at the articles I want to read and the good information inside.

I start off thinking I'll do a quick browse through it and then toss it. Every edition makes me keep the magazine and tuck it in my reading [stack], earmarked for the articles I want to read. From David Horowitz and Suze Orman to your book reviews and health articles—I love it! The article on the fish supplier ["Success at sea," February 2011] was fascinating!

Thanks for a good little piece of reading!
Nancy Weber
Vista, California

Have something to say?

Readers are encouraged to submit letters to our editors on any topic or issue covered in *The Connection*. Please include your full name and phone number or address. Send an e-mail to dialogue@costco.com; or write to: Dialogue, *The Costco Connection*, P.O. Box 34088, Seattle, WA 98124-1088; or fax to (425) 313-6718. The editors reserve the right to edit letters for publication.

Reader's guide to product availability

ALL PRODUCTS advertised are carried at Costco warehouses unless otherwise noted; however, products may not be available in all warehouse locations.

- Products are scheduled to be available during the period of *The Connection's* issue date.
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moss mold mildew & algae
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* Photo taken 6 months after one single application of Wet & Forget.

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WALLY AMOS: BE POSITIVE



Wally Amos is the founder of Uncle Wally's Muffin Company. You can reach him at www.wallyamos.com.

Testing positive

WHILE I AM constantly testing my theory that a positive attitude works, I am also tested to see if my actions are consistent with what I believe.

Recently, I had a demo in a retail outlet that did not go well. I showed up and nothing was ready. No cookies, no table. Eventually, things got organized and we had a good demo. We sold products and made new friends. I saw the potential to develop the account, create goodwill and turn a negative into a positive. I also took advantage of the event host's guilt and scheduled a second demo, only this time I added a storytime for the children. Everyone promised a great, well-coordinated demo. Exactly what I was expecting.


Almost four weeks to the day, I returned, anxious to have a successful and fun demo. I walked in the main entrance of the store and could not believe my eyes. Not a cookie in sight. Nothing on the floor for the children to sit on when I read stories. As Yogi Berra said, it was déjà vu all over again. I could not believe it.

Nevertheless, I did not get angry. What would I gain? I eventually spoke with the manager, and someone came with my products and we set up together. I began my routine, which consists of playing my kazoo and greeting customers. Needless to say, we had a successful demo.

When I say, "Be positive regardless," I mean just that: regardless of the circumstances. Get on top of the circumstances! You are in control of the circumstances, and when you are positive you set the tone for a positive, rewarding outcome.

Why be positive regardless? Because when you are, you are the winner. I sold more cookies by staying than by leaving. I met new friends, and while I have no idea how they will help me in the future, they might. I could not have met them if I had become angry and stormed out of the place. There are also health benefits. I remained stress free and controlled my blood pressure by staying calm and performing the job I came to perform.

Being positive is also the best way to strengthen your faith. So I say again, with conviction, "Be positive regardless!" ☑

 **More in archives**
On Costco.com, enter
"Connection." At *Online Edition*,
search "Wally Amos."

Make like a dragonfly

THE DRAGONFLY EFFECT is what happens when you coordinate four small activities to produce big results. It's named after the only creature that is able to move in any direction—with tremendous speed and force—when its four wings are working in concert.

In their book of the same name, *The Dragonfly Effect: Quick, Effective, and Powerful Ways to Use Social Media to Drive Social Change* (Jossey-Bass, 2010; www.dragonflyeffect.com), Costco members Jennifer Aaker and Andy Smith (with Carlye Adler) teach readers that "small actions create big change" and help them to harness social technology to achieve a single, focused, concrete goal. Aaker says, "It's remarkable how many businesses don't take the time to collectively understand why they are on Facebook, why they are on Twitter and what is their single-purpose goal."

The book teaches four key skills—focus, grab attention, engage and take action—and explains how to coordinate them with social technology to spark measurable results.

For instance, in the section "Grab Attention: How to Stick Out in an Overcrowded, Over-messaged, Noisy World," the book cites examples of businesses and how they achieved success using these four steps:

Get personal. Find personal hooks, ranging from physiological to self-actualization needs, that can be understood within seconds.

Deliver the unexpected. People like consuming and then sharing awe-inspiring information. Draw them in by piquing their curiosity. Look to reframe the familiar.

Visualize your message. Show, don't tell. Photos and videos speak millions of words. Synthesize your thoughts with quick visuals and show them to your point of view for feedback.

Make a visceral connection. Design your campaign so that it triggers senses—sight, sound, hearing and taste. Music is powerful and can often tap underlying emotions. ☑

Don't just brand, rebrand

AMERICAN EXPRESS OPEN, the small-business division of the financial services company, has introduced the OPEN Mic podcast (www.openforum.com/openmic). Hosted by journalist and entrepreneur Tyler Brûlé, each episode explores an issue central to entrepreneurs and their businesses' sustainability and growth.

For instance, the podcast on branding features a discussion with Iris Schreier, founder of Artyams, who underwent a brand makeover when she was partnered with OFFICELAB, a New York-based branding agency, as part of the project.

OPEN is also offering a free download of *OPEN Book: A Practical Guide to Business Growth*, (type the title into the search box at www.openforum.com). This guide to building a strong small-business brand features best practices for logo and website development and an informative Q&A with branding expert Chris Brogan. ☑



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*Based on the average cost per oz. at Costco vs. the average cost per oz. at a combination of leading retailers for the 52 weeks ending 12/25/10 (Source: Nielsen)

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WAREHOUSE ONLY

The trials of job scams

IF YOU ARE LOOKING for work, it is important to be aware of the many different scams that prey on vulnerable and eager job seekers. Here are some common scams you should be on the lookout for.

Payment-transfer scams

Although direct deposit paychecks are fine when the employer is legitimate, con artists who have used a job ad to lure an unsuspecting job seeker may tell the job seeker they can only pay wages by direct deposit, and ask for the job seeker's bank account number. Armed with the personal bank account number, they can steal both your identity and your money.

To avoid falling victim to payment transfer scams:

- Do not give personal bank account, PayPal account or credit-card numbers to an employer.
- Do not agree to have funds or paychecks direct-deposited to any of your accounts by a new employer.
- Do not forward, transfer or wire money to an employer.

Work-at-home scams

The chance to work from home seems too good to pass up. While there are some legitimate work-from-home opportunities, if it's a scam, the company offering the job will never pay. Many of these jobs will require a large financial investment on your part to get up and running. To avoid the work-from-home scams:

- Avoid advertisements that promise you will get rich quick.
- Research the company before agreeing to do any work.
- Never agree to be trained from home, and never pay for training material.
- Ask how often you will be paid. Get this information in writing, and do not work until you are promised a prompt payment.

Entertainment-industry scams

Some online ads offer the chance to earn \$100 a day or \$10,000 or more per month in an exciting entry-level position, often in sports, TV or film (fields that are incredibly hard to break into). Before you get dressed up and drive out to the job interview:

- Instead of just providing references, research the company as well. Learn what it is they do before setting out for an interview. If you can't find anything, this is likely a scam.

Scams offering a variety of jobs

Sometimes a company advertises a job and lists several job titles, such as sales, customer service and office administration positions, that are available.

Few companies are in need of this many positions (though some temp agencies may advertise for a large number). If the ad tells you to "hurry now" or says there are only 10 positions left, this is likely a scam. Usually there is no job at all, and this is another instance of a scam artist simply trying to obtain information about you. Other red flags are:

- The ad does not include a company name.
- The ad does not include a website for the company or links to find out more details.

Unsolicited e-mail job scams

You receive an unsolicited e-mail message, and the return e-mail address is a personal account, not a company e-mail. In most cases, such e-mails are sent by a crook who is simply trying to get your personal information. If you respond, you are likely to encounter many red flags, such as a substantial fee that is charged when submitting your résumé, or simply a link to a pay service that offers job listings if you pay the expensive monthly subscription price. To avoid trouble:


- Search online for the company's name. You may find other victims warning others about this scam. If there is no listing, the company is likely fake.
- Never give out personal information.
- Beware if the company does not offer a face-to-face interview.

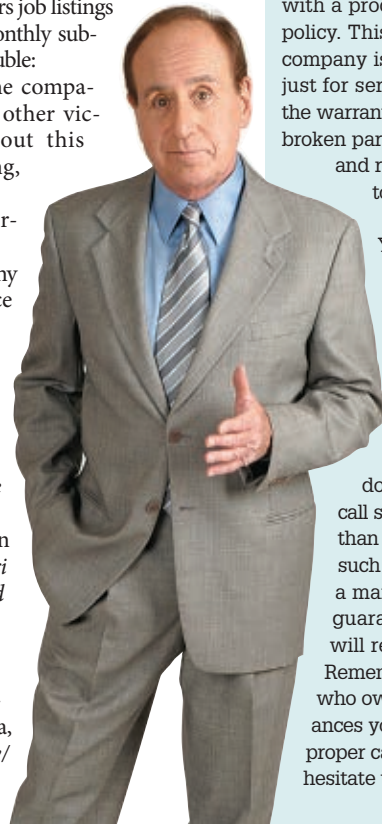
More resources

For updated tips on online job-seeking safety, explore www.worldprivacyforum.org/resumedatabase/privacytips.html

For reports on common job scams, see www.worldprivacyforum.org/consfraud/alert1.html

To file a complaint, go to www.ftc.gov

To find consumer protection agencies in your area, www.consumeraction.gov/state.shtml 



AMY CANTRELL

David Horowitz is a leading consumer advocate (www.fightback.com). He is a frequent guest on radio and television stations. Consult your local listings for dates and times.


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Ask David Horowitz

I PURCHASED a brand-new condo, which came with top-of-the-line appliances. However, all of the appliances required multiple service calls within the first year under warranty. Even after the appliances were serviced, they still did not perform properly. Now my kitchen is barely functional. Since I bought the condo with all of the appliances included, getting a refund seems impossible. What recourse do I have?

*Dale
Phoenix, AZ*

Most companies are equipped with a product-replacement policy. This means that the company is responsible not just for servicing them under the warranty, but for replacing broken parts. First, go online and read what other customers have done in similar situations.

You may see a pattern in regard to your specific products. Then, armed with that information, show proof that you have had the items serviced and they still do not work. Try to call someone higher up than customer service, such as an executive or a manager who can guarantee he or she will resolve your issue. Remember, as a customer who owns these appliances you are entitled to proper care, and do not hesitate to demand it. 

More in archives
On Costco.com, enter "Connection." At Online Edition, search "David Horowitz."

Do you have a question for David?

Just log on to www.fightback.com and "Ask David." For a fee, he will personally respond to your problem if you follow the instructions printed on his website. (Costco members receive a rebate off the normal fee.) Questions and answers of the greatest interest to Costco members will be used in this column (with the permission of the contributor) and will be posted on www.fightback.com.

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WAREHOUSE ONLY

Making the most of Windows

By Marc Saltzman

CHANCES ARE, YOU'RE a PC user who relies on Windows 7—the best-selling operating system in history—and takes advantage of its intuitive user interface, fast and reliable performance and many built-in features that help you in so many activities.

But guess what? This is only half the picture.

If you're using Windows 7, you can take advantage of Windows Live Essentials, a collection of free programs and services that help you take full advantage of the power of your PC. Here's a look.

Making the most of your photos and video

You probably have hundreds—if not thousands—of digital photos and videos stored on your hard drive. Windows Live Photo Gallery can help you organize, edit, view and share these memories.

For example, you can easily “tag” a photo with someone's name, and Windows Live Photo Gallery will scan the rest of your photos and look for that person's face. To find all photos of that person, just type in his or her name. You can also edit photos with simple tools, create a slide show or home movie, or quickly upload to sites such as Facebook.

A fun and powerful feature, Photo Fuse, lets you replace one part of a photo with a better one—such as a picture of your child smiling nicely instead of looking down—so the family portrait will show everyone looking at the camera at the same time.

With Windows Live Movie Maker, you can assemble your videos and photos onto a timeline, add transition effects and captions, music and narration, and then share your masterpiece.

Keeping in touch

Windows Live Messenger is an instant messaging tool that lets you type, talk or video-chat with friends, family and co-workers over the Internet.

Imagine holding up a newborn to your Web camera so your overseas relatives can see the baby—in high-definition clarity. Teens can do homework together by collaborating on a document, all the while chatting, sharing photos and perhaps playing a game when it's time for a break.

Windows Live Messenger also lets you easily access social networks, such as Facebook or LinkedIn. You can also pick up your e-mail here, as well as review calendar entries and contacts. And

you can share whatever is on your desktop with others.

Storing in the cloud

You can protect your important files, such as documents and photos, by uploading them to Windows Live SkyDrive, a password-protected service that lets you store up to 25 GB of data, free.

Storing your files in “the cloud” (online) offers three key benefits: You can access them from virtually any online computer in the world, your files are safe from local risks (such as fire or theft) and you can easily share specific folders with others online.

Logging in remotely

Another tool is Windows Live Mesh, which gives you the ability to log in to your PC remotely to access your Windows 7 desktop.

For example, you could access all of your media, such as music, photos and videos, on another PC while away from home. Or log in to your home PC while on a business trip to grab a PowerPoint presentation you forgot to take along.

You can also synchronize folders between multiple computers. Update a Word document on your laptop, for example, and it'll automatically synchronize with your desktop PC.

Finally, while it's not part of Windows Live Essentials, I would be remiss not to mention Microsoft Security Essentials, a free suite of Internet security software that can safeguard your PC and help protect your personal identity. You can get details at www.microsoft.com/security_essentials.

These are all helpful everyday tools that are part of the Windows 7 environment. They're worth checking out to see if they meet your computing needs. For more details on Windows Live Essentials, see <http://explore.live.com>. ☐

The Costco Connection

Costco sells a complete range of computers, from laptops to desktops, from various manufacturers using the Microsoft Windows 7 operating system, in the warehouses and online at Costco.com. All PC purchases come with free technical support from Costco Concierge Services.

Ask Marc Saltzman

Questions about electronics or computers you purchased at Costco? E-mail them to: connection@costco.com

Or send them to:
Tech Connection
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or fax to (425) 313-6718.

Please include “Tech Connection” in the subject line. Marc will answer selected questions in this column. We regret that unpublished questions cannot be answered individually.

Marc Saltzman, a leading high-tech reporter, contributes to more than three dozen prominent publications, appears on radio and TV, and is the author of 14 books.

JOHN GOLDSTEIN

More in archives
On Costco.com, enter “Connection.”
At Online Edition, search
“Tech Connection.”



STOCKDISC/PHOTODISC

Is college worth it?

THE COSTS FOR A college degree can be daunting. Four years of tuition and fees can range from about \$36,000 to \$140,000. Add room, board and other expenses, and the total can reach \$200,000.

Some insist the cost is worth it. They say college graduates will earn more during their lifetime than people with only a high school diploma, experience less unemployment and be better prepared for life. They also say that the fastest-growing occupations demand the highest levels of education.

Others argue that the cost of college may not be worth the investment. They say the lifetime earnings of college graduates has been exaggerated and many job categories that will add the most employees during the next decade can be performed by someone without a college degree. The college dropout rate indicates that not everyone who is pushed to attend college belongs there, they add.

What do you think?

Find out more about this topic on the Web:

www.enotalone.com/article/4502.html

www.ericdigests.org/2003-3/value.htm

www.collegeview.com/benefits_of_a_college_education.html

www.smartmoney.com/personal-finance/college-planning/the-case-against-the-college-degree/



YES

from members:

Marie Gazmen
Lahaina, HI



College can get expensive if one doesn't have their mind set to it, but once you know your priorities, then it's worth every penny.

Bern Roberts
Mesa, AZ



If you are selective, you can find a good cheap school. And if you are focused, you can minimize your time there.

Lorena Rodriguez
Arlington, MA



Employers look at that B.A. or doctorate and determine that you are an achiever. They know you can learn and adjust, and they will give you the chance.

NO

from members:

Adam Bergdorf
Visalia, CA



I have a job that doesn't require a degree and [I] get paid more than people I know who have a degree.

Vicki Seida
Clinton Township, MI



I don't see how graduating from college and having to pay back \$140,000-plus can really make one more prepared for a well-rounded and healthful life.

Jason Vasquez
Gypsum, CO



I consider myself a successful entrepreneur because of skills that I acquired on the job site, and not from a textbook.

from an expert in the field:



Dr. Stephen J. Rose is a labor economist who has been researching and writing about social class in America for the last 30 years. He is the author of *Social Stratification in the United States* (New Press, sixth printing).

TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING the economic landscape in favor of more skilled workers. Greater skill requirements mean that more education is often needed in established jobs. In the 1950s and '60s, most insurance agents did not have any college education. Today, 50 percent of insurance agents have a bachelor's degree (B.A.), while only 20 percent have not attended any college.

Employers view those with a B.A. as the most capable of adapting to new economic realities and are willing to pay for it: In 1980, workers with bachelor's degrees earned 40 percent more than workers with only high school diplomas; today that "premium" has risen to 74 percent.

For instance, according to some, insurance agents don't need a B.A. and the agents with degrees are not utilizing their college skills. The market tells a different story: Agents with a B.A. earn 50 percent more than agents with a high school diploma. Employers pay more because those with a B.A. are better at selling complex insurance policies to companies and individuals.

Police officers have undergone a similar transformation. Some believe that the 30 percent of officers with a B.A. are overeducated. In fact, they bring education-enhanced skills to their jobs and are more likely to be detectives and supervisors. Consequently, they earn on average 30 percent more than police officers with a high school diploma and as much as high school graduates who are managers and professionals.

Additionally, those with college degrees are more likely to be in the labor force, less likely to be unemployed and more likely to get a new job faster after being unemployed. Outside the economic realm, people with college degrees are healthier, live longer and are more likely to be married.

In the 1960s, even though America had the most educated workforce in the world, the rate of college-going among high school graduates doubled compared to the previous generation.

This investment paid off handsomely as the U.S. maintained the highest living standards in the world and led the way in creating the major breakthroughs of the computer revolution. President Obama and others are calling for the expansion of college attendance and completion as a way to ensure our leadership in the world economy in the future. If history is any guide, this is the right choice for the country and for the individuals who attend college. [C]

from an expert in the field:



Richard Vedder, a Distinguished Professor of Economics at Ohio University and director of the Center for College Affordability and Productivity (www.centerforcollegeaffordability.org), is the author of *Going Broke by Degree: Why College Costs Too Much* (AEI Press, June 2004).

TOO MANY PERSONS go to college today, not too few. Many would be better off doing non-degree programs in career colleges or vocational schools, learning to be truck drivers, electricians, beauticians or health-care workers. It is true that college grads typically make far more than high school grads, but it is also true that attending college involves a huge risk: Nearly half of full-time students do not graduate in six years, ending up with no diploma but sizable college debts.

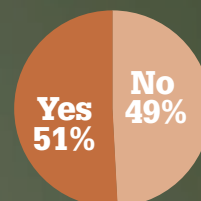
Two important other factors are further reasons we have oversold four-year college degrees. First, the cost of college is rising faster than people's income. Real (inflation-adjusted) tuition costs have doubled in the last generation—far more than the increase in our ability to pay them. Colleges are becoming bloated and highly inefficient, and increasingly students are asked to shoulder costs previously absorbed by government subsidies.

Second, the number of highly skilled, managerial, professional and technical jobs is growing far less rapidly than the number of new college graduates. We now have almost one-third of a million waiters and waitresses with college degrees, and more than 15 percent of taxi drivers likewise have a diploma. I have estimated that 60 percent of the increase in the proportion of Americans with college degrees since 1992 has ended up doing jobs that the Bureau of Labor Statistics says do not require a college diploma.

The bottom line: Students with excellent high school grades and college-entry test scores have a lower risk of failure and thus many should pursue a four-year degree. Students with poor high school grades and/or test scores have a higher probability of dropping out and/or being unable to get a good job even if they are successful in graduating. Those students should consider non-degree vocational programs or, perhaps, a community college. Students in the middle face the toughest decisions, although in many cases even they would benefit from trying the non-bachelor-degree options mentioned above, and then, if they are successful, perhaps transferring to a four-year degree program. [C]

MARCH DEBATE RESULTS:

Is offshore drilling in the best interest of the United States?



Percentage reflects votes received by March 16, 2011.

• • • • •

FEBRUARY DEBATE RESULTS:

Does WikiLeaks serve the public interest?

YES: 45% NO: 55%

Percentage reflects votes received by February 28, 2011. Results may reflect Debate being picked up by blogs.



See Dialogue pages for more debate responses

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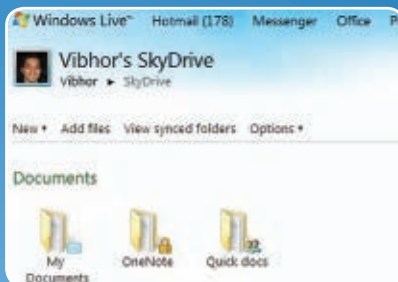
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Working with Uncle Sam

Federal contracts are out there for small business

By Harvey Meyer

IT'S NOT AS IF Charlene Turczyn is outfitted in an Uncle Sam costume, but her affinity for the federal government is undeniable: Her Springfield, Illinois-based firm, CMW and Associates, derives *all* of its revenues from Uncle Sam.

"It's a completely different world doing business with the federal government than the commercial sector," says Turczyn, senior principal of the 80-employee firm, which has won dozens of mostly project-management jobs since it first pursued federal contracts in 2003.

The federal government—the world's largest purchaser of goods and services, buying everything from food to military weapons parts to management services—offers a potentially super-size outlet for small businesses. Small firms won a record \$96.8 billion in federal prime contracts in fiscal 2009, representing almost 22 percent of all federal spending.

"The federal government can be a good avenue for increasing small-business revenues," says Margot Dorfman, vice president of the National Association of Small Business Contractors (NASBC). The NASBC

is a 200,000-member Washington, D.C., trade association that helps small firms do business with the federal government and prime contractors.

But Dorfman, a Costco member, acknowledges that working with the government can be challenging. For many small businesses, it may require considerable capital and effort—and patience. It took an average of 1.7 years for "active" small companies to land their first prime contract with the federal government, according to a recent survey by American Express' small-business division.

"The truth of the matter is it's a very onerous system. It's difficult to break into," says John Linder, Costco member and CEO of Calibre Door Closers, a seven-employee Orange, California, firm that receives 12 percent of its revenues from the federal government.

Still, for many businesses, it is worth the effort, especially during a downturned economy. Fortunately, help with federal government procurement comes from many quarters, including agencies that sport small-

business outreach offices (see www.osdbu.gov/offices.html). Another key source is the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), which offers reams of information and free online training courses on how to do contracting work. (See page 24 for more resources.) Small companies may find the following recommendations valuable in attempts to secure government contracts.

Know thyself. Understand your core competencies. Offer products and services you're capable of delivering.

Register your interests. Any firm doing business with the government has to follow certain set procedures. The company should first obtain an "identifier," such as a Data Universal Numbering System, or DUNS, number, a unique nine-character number that the government uses to identify the organization, says Mark Mills, president of the Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs) in Gallatin, Tennessee. Companies must also be registered in the Central Contractor Registration (www.ccr.gov) database. That online portal creates a formal record for companies while also enabling federal agencies and prime contractors to find small-business contractors.

Know Uncle Sam. Research what types of goods and services are purchased by the hundreds of federal agencies at www.usa.spending.gov. Initially, select one or two agencies and study their operations and needs.

"The federal government is so big it's like drinking from a fire hose," says Turczyn. "I tell our people we need to focus."

One quick way to learn about buying opportunities at targeted—and all—federal agencies is to check FedBizOpps (www.fbo.gov). All planned purchases of more than \$25,000 must be listed at that site.

Agencies periodically ask small companies to respond to bid solicitations, also at FedBizOpps, says NASBC's Dorfman. Even if you don't win a bid, responding to these "Sources Sought" notifications is a good way to market your goods/services, she notes.

"Through 'Sources Sought,' you get your name out there to decision makers," agrees

Linder. "I definitely plan to respond to more of them."

Start small. Successful contractors, according to the American Express survey, advise starting with smaller contracts, which may lead to larger opportunities. Perhaps test the waters with so-called "micro-purchases"—for

"The federal government can be a good avenue for increasing small business revenues."

—Margot Dorfman

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

example, buys of less than \$3,000 for supplies. Companies should check with individual agencies for these opportunities, which don't require competitive bidding and are often transacted via credit card, says Dorfman.

For purchases between \$3,000 and \$150,000, the government can use simplified procedures for soliciting and evaluating bids. In fact, federal rules require these "simplified purchases" be reserved for small businesses unless the contracting official cannot obtain offers from two or more small firms that are competitive on price, quality and delivery. Again, check with individual agencies for these and other smaller-procurement opportunities.

"A good way to learn about becoming a prime contractor is to start out by being a sub-contractor," adds Karen Hontz, SBA director of government contracting. "That also provides you past-performance information that you can use to pursue your own prime contract."

For subcontracting opportunities, check www.sba.gov/subnet, an SBA website. A subcontracting directory lists prime contractors by state, type of business and their small-business liaison officers, says Hontz.

Read the fine print. Many contracts reference the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation (DFAR), both of which post rules dictating how federal contracts are executed.

Read the fine print carefully in every contract and follow instructions exactly.

Build relationships. As gargantuan as the federal government is, securing a contract often is tied to personal relationships. That means attending PTAC, federal agency, NASBC or other outreach events and becoming acquainted with federal small-business representatives, prime contractors and small companies that successfully secured contracts.

"Everything else being equal," says Dorfman, "if you've built up a good relationship with somebody, you have a better chance of getting a contract."

Get debriefed. Whether she wins or loses a contract, Turczyn insists on asking for a debriefing, where a contracting official must discuss why a business did or did not win the bid.

"We learn how we can do it better that way," says Turczyn. "When you're working with a contracting official repeatedly, you get to know their preferences."

In the end, securing federal contracts isn't easy. As with the private sector, it requires time, patience, money and commitment.

"Don't be discouraged if you don't get that first contract you apply for," says Hontz. "Keep trying." ■

Harvey Meyer is a St. Louis Park, Minnesota, freelance writer.

Helpful resources

HERE ARE SOME organizations and websites that help small companies seeking contracts with the federal government:

- Small Business Administration
www.sba.gov
- National Association of Small Business Contractors
www.nasbc.org
- Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers
www.aptac-us.org
- FedBizOpps, www.fbo.gov. Lists all federal agency planned purchases of more than \$25,000.
- www.usaspending.gov. Shows the wide variety of goods and services purchased by federal agencies.
- Central Contractor Registration, www.ccr.gov. Enables federal agencies and prime contractors to find small-business contractors.
- www.osdbu.gov/offices.html. Lists federal agencies that feature small-business outreach offices.
- Association of Small Business Development Centers, www.asbdc-us.org. References Small Business Development Centers, which can offer assistance to small companies seeking federal contracts.—HIM

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In testing conducted by AMD performance labs streaming Flash Video at 1080p the 2011 VISION Technology from AMD-based notebook demonstrated an average 20 frames per second, while the comparable Intel-based notebook demonstrated an average 8 frames per second. BRNB-C2
The 2011 VISION Technology from AMD-based notebook consisted of an AMD Dual-Core Processor E-350 1.6GHz 18W, 2GB (1x2GB) DDR3-1066 system memory, AMD Radeon™ HD 6310 Discrete-Class Graphics with 15.6" 1366x768x32 - LED Backlight Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit. The Intel-based notebook was an Acer Aspire AS5740-5235 with Intel® Pentium® Processor P6000 (3M Cache, 1.86 GHz, 2C, 2T), Intel® HD Graphics, 2GB (2x1GB), PC3-8500 - Samsung M471B2874EH1-CF8 system memory, Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit.
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Hiring a new employee takes preparation

Hire power

PHOTODISC

By Rhonda Abrams

IF YOU WANT to grow your business, sooner or later you're going to have to get some help. But hiring can be tough. Sure, it's nerve-racking when you're the one looking for a job. But surprisingly, it's also intimidating when you're on the other side of the desk, looking to hire just the right person to help grow your company. With the proper preparation, however, you'll find just the perfect person or people to add to your team. You won't have to do everything alone, and they'll help take your business to the next level.

Ten hiring do's and don'ts

1 Do write a clear job description.

It's tempting to just jot down a quick job description when it's time to place a help-wanted ad. But developing a clear job description is actually a key to hiring success. It helps you attract exactly the right applicants, saves you time and helps you understand exactly what interview questions to ask and what tasks you'll assign to your new staff member.

2 Do be realistic.

While it's typical in a small business for people to wear many hats,

consider whether one real live person can manage very different tasks. Is it realistic for an admin to also do some basic bookkeeping, light shipping and occasional updating of your website? Probably. Is it realistic to think that an admin will be able to manage your computer network or make outside sales calls? Probably not.

3 Do interview several candidates.

Even if you're really excited about one applicant, you'll have a better idea if he or she is really the right person for the job if you interview at least three prospects in person. To save time, before having someone come in for an interview, schedule a phone interview. A 15- to 30-minute phone call can save hours of your time.

4 Do be prepared.

When interviewing, have a list of questions ready and be sure to ask the same questions of every candidate, as well as questions based on each individual's own résumé. And, of course, obey the law. Don't ask any questions that can be seen as discriminatory, such as "Which religious holidays do you observe?" or "Do you plan on having children?" (There's a list of legal and illegal questions in my new book, *Hire Your First Employee*, which you can get free—just see below.)

5 Do hire for attitude, train for skills.

If you find someone with a can-do and will-do

attitude, that'll be more important, in the long run, than someone with exactly the right experience or education. Sure, if you're hiring a pastry chef for your new Italian restaurant, you need someone who is able to make tiramisu. But for most positions, look for willing, eager-to-succeed employees and train them for the specific job tasks.

6 Don't be in a hurry.

Yes, if your restaurant is opening this Friday, you need that chef and wait staff now. (And why didn't you give yourself more time?) But most small businesses can afford to keep looking until they find the right person. Of course, you'll never find someone who's exactly perfect, but filling a position just because you need someone now is likely to lead to problems later.

7 Don't do all the talking.

When you're conducting an interview, it's typical to just start talking. Yes, you'll want to tell an applicant about the job and your company. But you won't learn enough about an applicant if you do all the talking.

8 Don't be overly impressed by credentials.

It's easy to be swayed by names of big corporations or leading universities on a résumé. But remember, you're looking for the best candidate, not the best résumé.

9 Don't be swayed by your first impression.

For important jobs, arrange for a second in-person interview with your top prospect. And be sure to check references.

10 Don't make—or imply—promises of job security or future raises.

For legal reasons, be careful not to say anything that can be misinterpreted as an implied contract, such as "I never fire anyone," or "You'll be here for at least five years." It's a good idea to give new hires an offer letter spelling out their pay and benefits and making it clear that they're an at-will employee (meaning you can terminate them without cause). ☐

Rhonda Abrams has started four successful companies. Currently, she heads *The Planning Shop*, a publisher specializing in entrepreneurship and small business (www.planningshop.com). She is the author of *Successful Business Plan: Secrets & Strategies*.

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COSTCO AND INTUIT have teamed up to make Rhonda's newest book, *Hire Your First Employee*, free to Costco members. You'll get this 178-page, \$24.95 value absolutely free. Just go to www.costcopayroll.com/rhonda.



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What's up with real estate?

By Karen Haywood Queen

SINCE INTEREST RATES are creeping up, now may be a good time to sell or buy a home. Yes, you read that right. As long as rates remained stable, potential buyers and sellers could afford to remain indecisive. Although rates are still near historic lows, people are motivated to take action since waiting could mean a higher rate and a larger mortgage payment, experts say.

Getting off the fence

In the housing market, inventory and selection are good, home prices remain flat and sellers are motivated and more likely to work with buyers on price, says Scott Dixon, president of the real estate division of Network Communications Inc., publisher of *The Real Estate Book* in 400 markets in North America. So whether you're a first-time buyer, looking for a move-up home or hoping to downsize, now might be a good time to make a decision.

"Interest rates aren't going to double this year, but they will continue to inch up," says Dixon. "As rates begin to go up, people who haven't felt a sense of urgency will decide now is the time to buy. That's a good thing for the real estate market, for home buyers and home sellers."

At press time, unemployment was at 9 percent, still high but down from even higher levels in 2010. Across the country, foreclosures and strategic defaults continue, but some markets have been recovering.

"I'm hopeful that our economy continues to rebound," says Christine Clifford, vice president of Access Mortgage Research. "Housing prices are at a good place. Consumers are paying down their credit cards. The biggest problem is we're not creating enough jobs."

The Costco Connection

Costco now offers a home mortgage and refinance program designed to give members excellent service combined with the best rates available. For more information, go to Costco.com and search "mortgage."

New rules, regs and restrictions

The bad news? New and pending regulations in response to the mortgage lending crisis mean new loans and refinancing will be more complicated, more time-consuming and more costly. Expect higher fees, higher mortgage insurance payments and bigger down payments.

There will be fewer zero to 5 percent down-payment loans. "The new norm will be 10 percent down," Dixon says. "Three percent down-payment loans are going to be few and far between."

The federal government also is working to shrink its footprint in the housing market. During the lending crisis of the last few years, the federal government has guaranteed more than nine out of every 10 new mortgages. The Obama administration said earlier this year that it wants to move more mortgages back to the private sector. The administration plans to gradually reduce new loans made by the federally controlled lenders popularly known as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Meantime, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) will be strengthened but won't take over the market share left by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Some regulations took effect late last year. Others, including the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, take effect this spring and later this year. Additional rules take effect in 2012, and others are still in development. So the sooner you act, the more likely you are to dodge at least some of the new and coming requirements.

Paperwork confusion

The new rules are intended to protect consumers, but they also "are incredibly confusing and contradictory," Clifford says.

"I am very concerned about the changes coming out this spring," she says. "The goal is to make sure consumers are informed, that they understand what they're getting into, to make sure they're really comfortable. I'm not sure all the disclosures really do that. I can confidently say that the cost of doing a mort-

New and proposed changes at a glance

- Fewer loans from the federal lending programs popularly known as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac
- Higher fees for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac loans
- Gradually increasing required down payments for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac loans to 10 percent
- Higher mortgage insurance payments on FHA loans
- Higher credit scores required to qualify for the FHA's most favorable loan terms
- Longer disclosure forms



gage is going to increase. It will take longer too. Nothing is easy right now."

Borrowers will have longer to review all the disclosures in their mortgage loan, Clifford says. That also means they'll need a longer lock-in period for the interest rate, which will cost more money.

Most borrowers want to know two critical things: their total monthly payment and how much cash they will need to bring to the table at closing. But the new three-page settlement forms that replaced the former one-page form don't break out this information.

On the other hand, "there is a huge effort to try to make the experience a positive one," Clifford adds.

As for refinancing, most people who could and should refinance did so by the end of 2010. "Refinancing ground to a halt in December when rates hit 5¼ percent," Clifford says. While refinancing made up 70 percent of loan volumes in 2010, she predicts they'll account for just 40 percent in 2011.

If you do refinance, allow for more time—just as you'll need to do for a mortgage. "It's impossible to do it in a week now," says Clifford. [E]

Karen Haywood Queen writes about personal finance and real estate.

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The big four-sh

By Tim Talevich

**The once upstart
coffee company
turns 40. How does
middle age feel,
and what's next?**

IT COULD BE A BIT worrisome that Starbucks, the world's biggest coffee company, took its name from one of fiction's biggest tales of hubris, *Moby-Dick*. The myopic Captain Ahab undertakes an ill-conceived, headstrong journey to slay Moby Dick, the whale, only to lead his crew—including a hapless first mate named Starbuck—to a watery demise.

For the first part of the new millennium, the coffee company seemed on a similar course. Starbucks pursued an Ahab-esque expansion plan, opening as many as six new stores per day. But while the company was growing stores—and thrilling Wall Street with short-term results—it wasn't growing a business. Costs weren't watched, supply chains broke down, shortcuts such as resteaming milk crept into the operations and at times you couldn't even smell coffee in a Starbucks, thanks to food that made the places smell more like a diner than a sanctuary for bean purists. It all exacted a steep price: a commoditization of the original coffeehouse experience, or part of Starbucks' soul.

But now, as the past half decade fades as an unpleasant memory and the company celebrates its 40th anniversary (March 30), the ship is righted. The turnaround ranks as one of the country's most dramatic at a time when a number of other major companies failed.

Howard Schultz, Starbucks CEO, sees a bright future for the company beyond coffee products.

CHRIS A. RUSNAK



"The real opportunity is to have learned from the mistakes that were made," CEO Howard Schultz tells *The Connection* in his Seattle office. Schultz chronicles the fall and rise of the coffee empire in *Onward: How Starbucks Fought for Its Life Without Losing Its Soul* (see box at right). It's his second book: In 1997, he wrote *Pour Your Heart Into It*, the story of Starbucks' early years. "The good news is that, in a very short period of time, not only have we transformed the company but we're healthier and stronger having gone through this than we ever have been."

The fall from grace

Schultz, 57, saw his first Starbucks store in Seattle in 1981. A New York-based salesman for a small appliance company, he traveled west to check out a small, 10-year-old coffee bean retailer that had been placing unusually large orders for his company's coffee maker. In the course of five years, Schultz would go to work at Starbucks, leave to start his own company of coffee bars, then end up buying Starbucks with a group of investors. By the early 1990s, Starbucks was soaring as one of the country's fastest-growing companies—grinding "coffee into gold," gushed *Fortune* magazine—and rewarding stockholders with astonishing profits.

The success was fueled by hit products, such as the slushy Frappuccino, an occasional acquisition and new locations, first in the U.S. and then internationally. In 2006, 25 years after Schultz first walked into the original Starbucks, the company had grown to 12,440 stores worldwide.

Yet, that same year, trouble was brewing. Overall store traffic was down, and customers weren't spending as much per visit. Certainly competition from

other specialty coffee shops and huge fast-food outlets such as McDonald's and Dunkin' Donuts, which were starting to enter the market, had an effect. But the bigger culprits were internal: The company had grown too fast, opening cookie-cutter stores and failing to adequately train new employees, build a strong enough management team and keep operating costs in check. Customers weren't happy because the stores had lost their original charm and intimacy.

By the end of 2007, the company's sacred daily "comps"—figures comparing sales per store from one year to the next—revealed double-digit drops. A *Wall Street Journal* story questioned the company's growth strategy—"At Starbucks, Too Many, Too Quick?"—and Starbucks' stock, which had reached \$40 per share, dropped to single digits.

And that was *before* the recession. All in all, a perfect storm had slammed into Starbucks (worth noting: a strange convergence of sorts also doomed Captain Ahab), and by the time it was over the company would close some 900 stores, lay off employees and raise quiet concerns of a possible takeover.

"A series of decisions led to a mentality I would loosely describe as entitlement or hubris," Schultz reflects today. "We had such long-term success for almost 15 years where everything we touched worked, more or less. And, over time, it caused people to believe that there was a level of invincibility. And as we all know, there's no one person or one company or enterprise that's invincible."

No easy fixes

On the afternoon of February 26, 2008, Starbucks customers at all 7,100 stores in the U.S. found the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32



The Costco Connection

Howard Schultz's new book, *Onward*, will be available at most Costco locations. All proceeds from the book will go to Starbucks' charitable funds that benefit communities and employees in need. You can also find a wide variety of Starbucks coffees and Kirkland Signature™ coffee roasted by Starbucks in all Costco locations.

“Our appetite for growth, for innovation and for transforming the company in many different ways probably has never been stronger.”



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

coffee shops closed, with this sign on the door: “GREAT ESPRESSO REQUIRES PRACTICE. THAT’S WHY WE’RE DEDICATING OURSELVES TO HONING OUR CRAFT.”

It was an extraordinary measure to retrain the company’s 135,000 baristas on the art of pouring the perfect shot. But closing stores for an afternoon was really just a small part of a complete corporate makeover.

It started at the top. Schultz had stepped down as CEO in 2000, relinquishing day-to-day management of the company to focus on global strategies. But on a Sunday evening in early 2008, he summoned the company’s senior managers to his Seattle home for a dramatic announcement: After months of wrestling with the idea, he had decided to return as the company’s CEO. He made the same announcement to a thousand Starbucks employees (called “partners” at Starbucks) at corporate headquarters the next day. “We have to find and bring the soul of our company back, find our voice,” he told the crowd, to strong applause.

The makeover that was to take place over the next 24 months reached throughout the company, dissecting everything from its organizational structure to distribution methods to an antiquated checkout system in the stores. The most painful step was store

closures. For years, Starbucks had enjoyed a sales-to-investment ratio of two to one—that is, a store typically brought in \$2 for every \$1 it cost to open within 12 months. But hundreds of stores were missing that mark, including many newly opened ones. Most of the stores on the hit list had been opened within the previous three years.

While Starbucks focused on cuts, it also went on the offensive to find ways of winning back customers. Some of these were simple measures—retraining the baristas, once again grinding the coffee beans in the stores, a step that had been dropped to save time, and tossing brewed coffee after 30 minutes. New machines were brought in to make better coffee and restore a sense of theater to the coffee-making experience. And, stung by a *Consumer Reports* taste test that rated its coffee behind McDonald’s, Starbucks experimented with its roasting process to create a new signature blend, Pike Place Roast.

The company looked at freshening up store designs, created new programs such as rewards cards and actively turned to social networking. And it came up with a big hit: VIA, the company’s first instant coffee.

But perhaps more important, fixing Starbucks required everybody, from baristas to senior management, to believe that a new,

leaner company would be a better one—and that it could survive the challenges of the recession. “What I think we had going for us during our transformation is that there was still a large reservoir of trust from our customers and obviously from our people,” Schultz says. “But we had to demonstrate that, as leaders, we were going to transform the company in a way that would not dilute the integrity of the brand and the integrity of the culture.”

In late 2008, Shultz and his team traveled to New York for a biennial conference with investors and Wall Street analysts. Despite all the steps taken over the previous year, comp sales were still down worldwide. Schultz addressed the group, outlining the cost-cuttings and the new programs the company had undertaken. When we all meet again in two years, he boldly predicted, we’ll all talk about where Starbucks stock was, and where it is today.

Looking onward

Fast-forward through those two years to last December, and Schultz again stood before analysts in New York. He triumphantly reported that in 2010 Starbucks’ revenues had reached an all-time high of \$10.7 billion; company stock, trading for around \$8 just two years previously, had jumped back into the

Starbucks opened its first store (left and below) in 1971 in Seattle's Pike Place Market. The bohemian shop sold only whole-bean coffee. It's still there.

\$30s. "What a difference two years makes," remarked one industry analyst after the session ended. So far this year, Starbucks reported record first-quarter earnings per share.

As the company enters its forties, the sense at Starbucks is that the company survived rough waters over the past half decade and is now able to devote incredible energy and resources to the future—though with new wisdom and caution, Schultz is quick to point out, referring to lingering soft consumer confidence and an unemployment rate that has stayed around 9 percent.

His office overlooks Seattle's bustling port, and the thought comes to mind that you can almost see China from there. Indeed, adding stores overseas is a cornerstone of Starbucks' plans, both in China, where Schultz sees the opportunity to open literally thousands of new stores, and in India, which he says may have the world's largest middle class in the coming decades. "We're not going to do things that in any way resemble the kind of growth and lack of discipline that existed in the past," he says.

The company is also trying out new concepts, such as serving beer and wine in some stores after 4 p.m., and has launched a mobile payment system. But most intriguing are new directions the company hinted at in unveiling a new logo in January. Gone is the logo's lettering of "STARBUCKS COFFEE." It means, Schultz says, that a large part of Starbucks' future will involve products beyond coffee. The company is developing a wide variety of goods that will be introduced in Starbucks shops, then rolled out to the grocery trade. Stay tuned.

"Our appetite for growth, for innovation and for transforming the company in many different ways probably has never been stronger," Schultz concludes. "And I am hungrier today than I have been in many, many years in terms of the capability of the company and the aspiration I have for Starbucks."

Perhaps none of this thinking would be taking place if Starbucks hadn't suffered its perfect storm. It forced the company to examine its values and return to its roots: innovation and pleasing customers. Schultz says he's most pleased that Starbucks was able to right its course without compromising its cornerstones, rejecting suggestions to buy lower-quality coffee or eliminate healthcare for part-time workers. It found and eliminated a corporate hubris that was leading to disaster.

Ahab would have been wise to have learned the same lessons. ☞



Costco and Starbucks: A long history

STARBUCKS AND COSTCO share a long history, beyond coffee products.

The two companies both have their headquarters in the Seattle area and began with just a few local stores in the early 1980s. Howard Schultz, Starbucks' CEO, has tapped Costco's founders, Jim Sinegal and Jeff Brotman, for strategic and personal advice over the years. (Brotman, in fact, was an early member of the Starbucks board of directors.) Like corporate siblings, the two companies have grown up together to become leaders in their respective industries—and each has played a role in the other's development.

One of Starbucks' early moves was to begin selling its roasted whole coffee beans in retail settings. In 1987, Costco was the first retailer to sell Starbucks roasted whole beans—an exclusive product called Meridian Coffees Roasted by Starbucks. Today, Costco carries a number of Starbucks products, from roasted beans to its popular VIA instant coffee to bottled Frappuccino.

Costco CEO Sinegal says the Meridian product was an early example of

Costco's quest to find unique, premium products for members. "The fact that we were the only retailer out there selling coffee roasted by Starbucks was a significant addition to our product selection and reflected the quality that we wanted to present to our members," he says. "It was part of our overall scheme to be able to offer the types of new products that were available—premium products."

At the time, Meridian coffee was one of just a handful of non-name-brand products in the warehouses. Eventually, this private-label concept grew and became Kirkland Signature™, Costco's private brand.

"Starbucks was one of the first of those controlled labels, and I think it was a catalyst and set the bar for what would later become the Kirkland Signature standard of excellence," comments Tim Rose, Costco's senior vice president of foods.

Schultz recounts that working with Costco gave Starbucks an important early tool—a way to broaden distribution of its products. "But more than that, I think the association of Costco and Starbucks as two Northwest companies that began to move nationally, and move nationally together, produced great synergy, a great partnership," he says. "And over the years I think the relationship has gotten stronger. We've been able to innovate and do things that perhaps we never dreamed we could do in the past."

He adds, "I think Starbucks owes a great piece of our history, and personal gratitude, to how the partnership was formed and what it's meant to both companies."

Sinegal and Rose say the two companies have common philosophies about their respective customers and employees. "I think we share a passion for quality and achieving excellence in what we do," Rose says. "And I think we share a philosophy of not only taking care of our customers but also taking care of our employees." —TT



COURTESY OF STARBUCKS

At Easter Time Enjoy

Aussie Roast Leg of Lamb with Cranberry, Plum, and Macadamia Nut Stuffing



Recipe provided by
Meat & Livestock Australia

INGREDIENTS

- 1 boneless Australian leg of lamb
- 3 tbsps olive oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup yellow onion, medium dice
- 1 cup dry white wine such as a Chenin Blanc
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white sugar
- Juice and zest of 1 lemon
- 2 ounces dried cranberries
- 3 ounces dried plums (prunes), cut into quarters
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 ounces rustic-style bread such as Italian Pugliese, cut into small cubes
- 3 ounces macadamia nuts

METHOD

Preheat a conventional oven to 350°F (325°F for convection). In a small saucepan, heat 1 tbsp of the olive oil. Add the onion and sauté until onion becomes translucent. Add wine, water, sugar and lemon juice. Stir to dissolve sugar. Add dried fruit, season with salt and pepper, and bring mixture to a simmer. Cook for approximately 7 to 10 minutes until fruit has rehydrated.

While fruit is simmering, place cubed bread in small mixing bowl. Place macadamia nuts in a plastic zip bag. Using a small pan or a meat tenderizer, lightly hammer the nuts until broken up and add to bread.

After fruit has simmered, use a slotted spoon to carefully remove fruit and add to the bread and nut mixture. Allow the hot syrup to drain from the spoon back into the pan. Return pan to stove and continue cooking the syrup over medium heat until thick – approximately 5 minutes. Add the hot syrup to the bread mixture and stir to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste, set aside.

Remove the netting from the boneless leg and unravel the leg. Season the outside of the leg with salt and pepper. Flip over and add stuffing mixture to one side of the leg cavity, and roll up the leg. Tie leg with butcher's twine in two or three places to hold together. Use skewers to hold the leg together at the ends. Rub the leg with the remaining 2 tbsps of olive oil and place on a rack in a roasting pan or oven-safe dish.





Place into oven and cook uncovered until a meat thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the roast reads 125°F to 130°F – about 20 minutes per pound (unstuffed) for approximate cooking time. Remove from oven and cover with foil. Allow to rest for 10 to 15 minutes before slicing. Roast will continue to increase in temperature 8°F to 10°F.



Fresh, Easy and Delicious.

TEST LAMB FOR DONENESS

You can test for doneness by simply prodding the lamb with your finger. When it has a springy but firm texture and is moderately juicy, the lamb is done. The firmer the feel of the meat, the more well-done it is. Most people prefer lamb when it's medium-rare or medium, but lamb is also delicious when cooked well-done. Whichever way you prefer, here's a handy guide to use when cooking Australian lamb.

			
Rare	Medium Rare	Medium	Well-done
TEMP	TEMP	TEMP	TEMP
120–130°F	130–140°F	140–150°F	150–165°F
APPEARANCE	APPEARANCE	APPEARANCE	APPEARANCE
Very red; very moist with warm juices	Lighter red; very moist with warm juices	Pink red color; moist with clear pink juice	No pink or red, slightly moist with clear juices
COOK	COOK	COOK	COOK
20–25 min/lb at 360°F	25–30 min/lb at 360°F	30–35 min/lb at 360°F	35–40 min/lb at 360°F
REST	REST	REST	REST
8–10 min	8–10 min	8–10 min	8–10 min
FEEL	FEEL	FEEL	FEEL
Soft	Soft, slightly spongy and springy	Slightly firm and springy	Firm



Paperbacks
available early April

CAN YOU COOK DINNER IN 10 MINUTES?

The third offering in *Cooking Light's* best-selling *Fresh Food Fast* series is the freshest and the fastest yet! With hundreds of all-new recipes, there's something healthful, delicious and easy for even the busiest home cooks. In fact, 100 of the new recipes call for just four ingredients, and many can be prepared in 10 minutes or less! "Fix It Faster" tips teach you how to speed things up, "Ingredient Spotlights" rev up prep time, and more. Armed with **Fresh Food Superfast** (Oxmoor), meal planning is a snap. So is the cookbook's predecessor, **Fresh Food Fast**, a vast collection of 250 recipes you can make in 15 minutes. And making a home-cooked meal after a long day at work gets a lot easier with **Fresh Food Fast Weeknight Meals**.

Crispy Curry Scallops

Prep: 5 minutes
Cook: 5 minutes

- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- Lime wedges
- 1½ pounds large sea scallops (about 12)
- ½ cup panko (Japanese breadcrumbs)
- 2 teaspoons lower-sodium soy sauce



Recipe from *Fresh Food Superfast*

1. Pat scallops dry with paper towels. Place panko in a shallow dish.
2. Toss scallops with soy sauce in a medium bowl; sprinkle evenly with curry powder. Dredge in panko.
3. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add scallops to pan; cook 2 to 3 minutes on each side or until browned. Serve with lime wedges. Yield: 4 servings (serving size: 3 scallops).

CALORIES 207; FAT 3.9 g (sat 0.3 g, mono 1.6 g, poly 1.1 g); PROTEIN 29.4 g; CARB 11.1 g; FIBER 1.3 g; CHOL 56 mg; IRON 0.6 mg; SODIUM 388 mg; CALC 43 mg

IF IT'S TIME FOR DINNER, IT'S TIME TO MAKE IT SIMPLE.

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Get great, delicious and—best of all—easy ideas for wonderful dinners in **Real Simple Dinner Tonight: Done!** (Real Simple). From the editors of *Real Simple* magazine come nearly

200 scrumptious recipes in one beautiful book, all designed for today's busy home cook.



Paperback on sale April 5



Braised chicken and spring vegetables from *Real Simple Dinner Tonight: Done!*

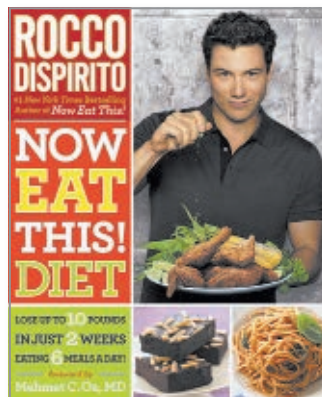


Ring-bound binders available mid-April

Kraft Foods 4 Cookbooks in 1 and **4 Books in 1: Cookies, Cakes, Brownies, Cupcakes** (Publications International, Ltd.). Whatever you're hungry for, you'll find it here!

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NOW'S THE TIME TO MAKE BETTER EATING CHOICES!

Eat right and eat well at the same time! Celebrity chef Rocco DiSpirito will show you how you can lose weight quickly and easily just by making healthier choices and smart substitutions. The secret is revealed in **Now Eat This! Diet** (Grand Central).

Paperback available now

"A must-read for anyone interested in leadership, management, or the quest to connect a brand with the consumer." —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

In 2008, Howard Schultz returned to the helm as CEO of Starbucks, the company he had led for decades. In **Onward** (Rodale Books), Schultz shares the strategies and principles that helped Starbucks return to its core values and reignite the innovation required to thrive in a dramatically shifting marketplace. *Onward* is a candid portrait of how every businessperson can meet the challenges of today's economy, as well as an engaging and personal story that gives readers a vivid, behind-the-scenes look at the company—one few have ever seen.



Hardcover on sale March 29

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Learn all about the ways of the wee folks in **Faeries: Deluxe Collector's Edition** and discover everything you've always wanted to know about gnomes in the delightful **Gnomes: Deluxe Collector's Edition** (Abrams). Each book comes with eight removable and frameable prints!



Hardcovers
available
early April

Rocco's remake

A diet you can sink your teeth into

By Tim Talevich

POPULAR CHEF AND Costco member Rocco DiSpirito is on a health kick, and that's good news for all of us. He has given many favorite foods, from lobster bisque to Red Velvet Chocolate Squares, calorie-cutting makeovers for his latest cookbook, *Now Eat This! Diet*. The book also gives exercise tips and other weight-loss strategies. *The Connection* recently asked the New York City-based chef about his latest creations.

The Costco Connection: Tell us about the old Rocco and the new.

Rocco DiSpirito: The old Rocco being the guy who used to eat foie gras seven days a week? [laughing] Fast-forward 20 years, and calories and fat and nutrition had become an issue in my life. I was at a moment where I could start taking lots of medicine for cholesterol and high blood pressure problems, or I could listen to my doctor and do what he said, which was to eat well and exercise. For once I actually listened to him.

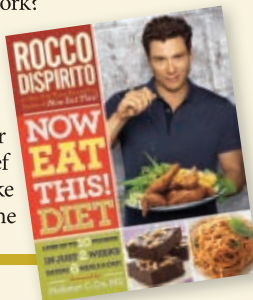
CC: In your book, you're saying we can eat a lot of the foods we love, but with better ingredients. How does this work?

RD: Oddly, my background in the type of cooking I did really helped me in this. The flavor memories of these dishes in their most indulgent state was my goal for every dish.

It starts with thoughtful ingredients. For example, whole milk or skim milk? Fatty beef or lean beef? Thousands of small choices like those add up to an enormous change in the

The Costco Connection

Rocco DiSpirito's new cookbook, *Now Eat This! Diet*, is available at most Costco locations. While you're at Costco, you'll find many of the ingredients you'll need for delicious meals.




MARKUS KUNKO & INDRANI



final result. Also, I experimented with cooking techniques to reduce calories while retaining flavor. I sometimes found I'd have to add back in a certain ingredient, such as butter for a butter sauce. But I experimented to find how I could use the least amount so it would have a real presence, but not in a calorically significant way.

CC: Have a good example?

RD: My Red Velvet Chocolate Squares. All the flavor of chocolate comes from cocoa powder, none from cocoa butter. So I found that cocoa powder in a base of puréed vegetables like red beans tasted great, and with a little flour, egg substitute, and vanilla and almond extract I was able to duplicate very respectably the flavor of red velvet and chocolate in a 106-calorie square. They're so ridiculously satisfying. 

Lemon Pepper Shrimp ◀

1 pound large shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails removed

Salt

2 teaspoons coarsely ground black pepper

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

¼ cup fresh lemon juice

¼ cup hot pepper jelly

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1 bunch broccoli rabe

Heat a large nonstick sauté pan over medium-high heat.

Meanwhile, blot the shrimp with paper towels to ensure that they are dry. Season one side of the shrimp with salt to taste. Sprinkle 1 teaspoon of pepper onto one side of the shrimp and lightly press so that the pepper adheres. Repeat on the other side with

the remaining pepper. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to the pan, and then add the shrimp, salted side down. After about 2 minutes season the other side with salt and turn the shrimp over. Cook the shrimp until done, about 2½ minutes on each side. Transfer the shrimp to a plate and set aside.

Turn off the heat and, while the pan is still hot, add the lemon juice, pepper jelly and butter. Stir until well mixed. Toss the shrimp back into the pan and coat in the sauce. Set aside.

Heat another large nonstick sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the remaining oil and the garlic. Sauté until the garlic begins to brown, about 2 minutes. Add the broccoli rabe and cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve the shrimp with the broccoli rabe. Makes 4 servings.

Per serving: 283 calories, 12 g fat (3 g sat/6 g mono/1.6 g poly), 180 mg cholesterol, 207 g sodium, 18 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber, 27 g protein



KRISTADA

Red Velvet Chocolate Squares ►

Butter-flavored nonstick cooking spray

½ cup chopped canned beets, drained

7 ounces (about 1 cup) canned red beans, drained and rinsed

½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

¾ cup liquid egg substitute

3 tablespoons whole-wheat pastry flour

¾ cup agave nectar

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

½ teaspoon almond extract

2 teaspoons natural red food coloring

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Spray an 8 x 8 x 2-inch baking dish with cooking spray.

Combine the beets, beans, cocoa powder, egg substitute and flour in the bowl of a food processor. Process until the mixture is smooth, about 2 minutes, scraping down the bowl halfway through.

Add the agave nectar, butter, vanilla, almond extract and food coloring. Process until all of the ingredients are combined, about 1 minute.

Pour the batter into the prepared baking dish, and smooth the top with a spatula. Bake for 20 minutes, turning the dish halfway through the baking time. Turn down the temperature of the oven to 300 and bake for another 5 to 8 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with a little bit of soft batter clinging to it. It should not come out clean—if it does, it's overcooked.

Let the cake cool completely in the baking dish on a wire rack. Then put it in the fridge for at least 3 hours. When it's cold, cut it into 12 squares and serve. Refrigerate any leftovers. Makes 12 bars (106 calories each).

Tip: I've experimented with these squares many times in my kitchen. What I discovered is that, unlike most baked items, these squares taste best after being refrigerated for at least 3 hours. Chilling the bars coalesces the flavor and stabilizes the texture. Enjoy them cold, and you'll enjoy them more.

Per serving (each bar): 106 calories, 1.5 g fat (1 g sat/0 g mono/0 g poly), 2.5 mg cholesterol, 62 mg sodium, 22 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 3 g protein.



KRITSADA



KRITSADA

Spicy-Sweet Linguine alla Vodka ◀

8 ounces whole-wheat linguine

1½ cups store-bought low-fat marinara sauce

1 (4-ounce) bottle fire-roasted red peppers, cut into thin strips (about ¾ cup)

¼ cup 2% Greek yogurt

1 cup chopped fresh basil

1 to 1½ teaspoons hot pepper sauce

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

6 tablespoons grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook according to the package directions, about 9 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring the marinara sauce and sliced peppers to a simmer in a large nonstick sauté pan over medium heat. Cook the sauce, stirring it occasionally with a heat-resistant rubber spatula, until it is slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove the sauce from the heat.

Put the yogurt in a small bowl. Stir about ½ cup of the warmed sauce into the yogurt until smooth (this tempers it and prevents the yogurt from curdling). Then whisk the yogurt mixture into the marinara sauce. Keep the sauce off the heat, and cover the pan to keep the sauce warm.

Drain the linguine in a colander. Slide it into a large serving bowl, and add the sauce, basil and 1 teaspoon of the hot pepper sauce. Toss gently until the linguine is evenly coated with sauce. Season with salt and pepper to taste and, if you like, the remaining ½ teaspoon hot pepper sauce. Sprinkle the cheese on top, and serve. Makes 4 servings.

Note: You'll notice there's no vodka in this recipe, and that's intentional. It doesn't add much except empty calories, and who wants to waste a great cocktail in a dish of pasta?

Per serving: 307 calories, 7 g fat (2 g sat/1g mono/0.5 g poly), 8 mg cholesterol, 772 mg sodium, 52 g carbohydrate, 8 g fiber, 14 g protein.



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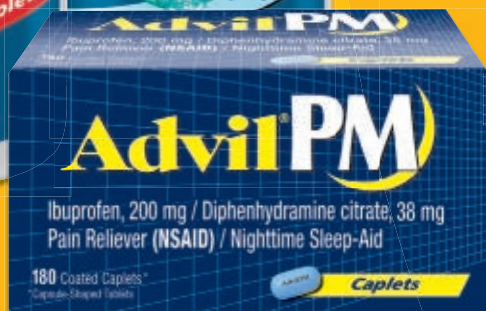


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Health Q&A with Dr. Phyllis Ritchie

Doc talk



Dr. Phyllis Ritchie

Q: *I read in the paper that zinc shortens a cold. How much should I take if I get a cold?*

A: A study regarding zinc supplements and the common cold was recently published in the Cochrane Library. It looked at 15 prior zinc studies in 1,360 people. Researchers found that people who took zinc supplements (syrup, lozenges or tablets) within 24 hours reduced the length of their cold by a day. The review also showed that zinc seemed to reduce the severity of the cold symptoms.

Prior studies of zinc, however, have not shown any benefits. Also, the study does not provide any recommendations regarding the optimum dose, formulation or length of treatment because the studies that were reviewed were not all uniform.

In my opinion, more studies need to be conducted to determine if zinc works and at what dosage. However, if you get a cold, zinc lozenges or syrup may be beneficial if taken within 24 hours of the symptoms.

Q: *How can you avoid or get rid of bedbugs?*

A: Unfortunately, bedbugs have made an international resurgence over the past decade. Some experts believe it's related to the ban on DDT in 1972, but most entomologists agree the most important factor is a lack of education in bedbug identification and management. Also, international travel has greatly increased over the past decade, resulting in more bedbugs hitching a ride in suitcases and thus around the world.

Bedbugs are not necessarily associated with unsanitary conditions and can be found anywhere. One of the most common places to find them is on a hotel mattress. Prior to sleeping on a hotel mattress, pull back all of the bedding on the mattress and specifically look at the head of the bed and in the mattress seams and box springs. Look for small dark dots, which are evidence of bedbug feces. You may want to spray some cedar spray on mattresses if you do think there are bedbugs. They don't like the cedar smell, and it may chase them away.

Other common places where you might encounter bedbugs are garage sales and thrift

stores. Follow these steps if you thrift-shop:

- Carefully inspect all items you purchase (look for evidence of dark dots everywhere).
- Take all small items home in a sealable plastic bag.
- Don't remove the items from the plastic bag until you are ready to either dry-clean them or put them in the washer set at hot (120 F) and then in the dryer on a high setting for at least 30 minutes.
- Throw the plastic bag away outside in the garbage can.
- Don't purchase or take home any items if in doubt.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43

Buyer's pick

Kim Walior
Pharmacy Buyer



THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES of Health reports that 60 million to 70 million people in the U.S. are affected by digestive disorders each year, resulting in \$141.8 billion in medical costs. Up to 25 percent of adults may suffer pain and discomfort from digestive issues.


Poor diet, travel, a hectic lifestyle, medication use and common everyday stress can disrupt the healthy balance of good-versus-bad bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract. Good bacteria used to be more readily available in a variety of fermented or cultured food sources, such as yogurt and cheese, but overprocessing in many foods limits the availability of probiotics (good bacteria thought to be beneficial) in what we eat.

Probiotic supplements are rapidly gain-

ing recognition as a natural, safe and effective means to restore that balance. Clinical studies are demonstrating the ability of beneficial bacteria to strengthen the digestive system and boost immune defense.

Here's what we know about the probiotics:

- They promote intestinal regularity.
- They are scientifically formulated to restore healthy intestinal balance during and after antibiotic therapy—a frequent cause of diarrhea.
- They help to relieve the constipation side effect associated with prescription drugs such as painkillers, antidepressants and iron supplements.
- They have been proven to aid calcium absorption to encourage greater bone mass.
- They are clinically proven to boost the body's natural immune system.

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Costco carries cranberry juice and tablets, a variety of cold remedies and more.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

In conclusion, when traveling or thrift-shopping, change your practices and be very diligent in bedbug detection. If they somehow do get into your home, seek professional extermination help. Also, check out the website www.bedbugregistry.com to see if a hotel has ever had a bedbug issue.

Q: What are effective methods to prevent urinary tract infections?

A: Cranberry juice and cranberry tablets may decrease the number of urinary tract infections (UTIs) in women who develop recurrent UTIs. (Recurring UTIs are defined as two or more symptomatic infections within a 12-month period that are subsequently cured with antibiotics.)

Daily low-dose antibiotics prescribed by a healthcare provider also help to prevent UTIs. Antibiotics taken after sexual activity (within two hours) are also preventive. Use of a probiotic (such as lactobacillus) is presently being studied, but may also have a role in preventing UTIs.

Other suggestions that may help prevent UTIs, although there is no good scientific data, are urinating after intercourse, drinking plenty of fluids throughout the day and, for postmenopausal women, the use of topical vaginal estrogen.

Finally, it is always a good idea to check in with your healthcare provider to make sure no underlying medical issue is causing the recurrent UTIs.

Q: Who should get the "shingles vaccine"?

A: Shingles is caused by the varicella-zoster virus. This is the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a case of chickenpox, the virus remains dormant in nerve cells. It then can reactivate years later and cause shingles. Shingles is most common in people 50 and older, but can develop at any age.

Shingles usually manifests itself as a rash or blisters on the skin. It can be excruciatingly painful. One of the major concerns with shingles is the complication called postherpetic neuralgia, a debilitating pain over the rash site that can last months or even years. Shingles can recur in about 1 to 5 percent of patients.

In 2006 the Food and Drug Administration approved a new shingles vaccine called Zostavax. The Centers for Disease Control recommends anyone age 60 or older should receive the vaccine, even if they've had shingles in the past. 📷

In private practice for 13 years, Costco member Dr. Phyllis Ritchie (<http://drphyllisritchie.com>) is a Board Certified Infectious Disease specialist whose medical interests include sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, resistant staph infections, orthopedic-related infections and travel medicine. She also writes a medical column for The Oregonian and OregonLive.com.

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¹Ginde A.A. Demographic difference and trends of vitamin D insufficiency in the US population, 1988-2004. Nat Rev Rheumatol. 2009 Aug; 5(8):417-8



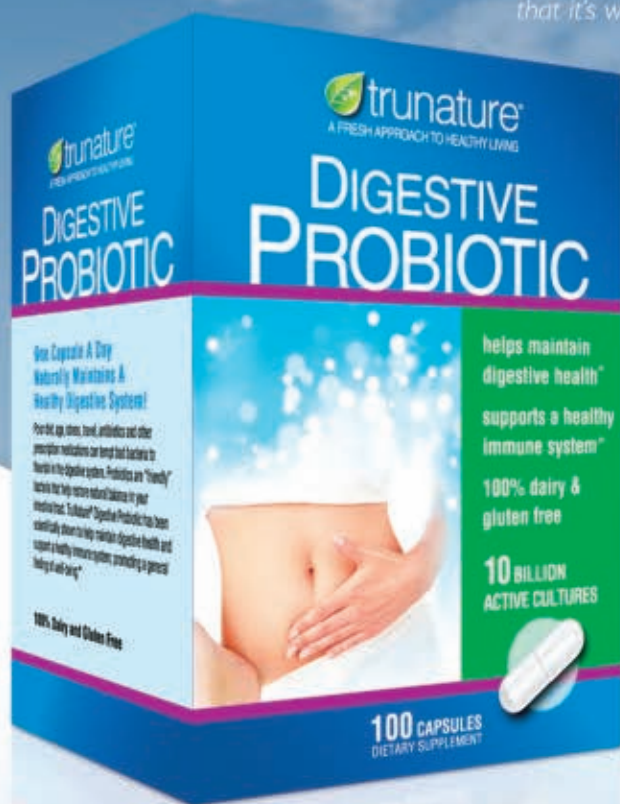
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April IBS Awareness Month

IRRITABLE BOWEL Syndrome (IBS) affects between 25 million and 45 million people in the United States. The number is difficult to pin down because many sufferers do not seek treatment.

IBS is a complex disorder characterized by abdominal pain, cramping, bloating, diarrhea and constipation. The exact cause is unknown, but the symptoms may result from the way the gut, brain and nervous system interact, and involve problems with contractions in the muscles of the colon. Symptoms occur for at least 12 weeks in a 12-month period.

This is a long-term condition for which there is no known cure. The individual symptoms can be treated by medications and changes in diet and lifestyle. Counseling often proves beneficial.

IBS facts

- More women than men are affected, by a ratio of two to one.
- Most persons with IBS are under the age of 50, but older adults can suffer as well.
- IBS is second to the common cold as a cause of absenteeism from work.
- Stress does not cause IBS, but it can worsen or trigger symptoms.
- IBS is unpredictable; symptoms vary and are sometimes contradictory.
- The impact of IBS can range from mild inconvenience to extreme debilitation. People with moderate to severe IBS must struggle with symptoms that often impair their physical, emotional, economic, educational and social well-being.

For more information, visit the website of the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders, www.aboutibs.org.

—David Wight

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Fending off spring allergies

By Deborah Herlax Enos



FIFTY MILLION Americans suffer from allergies. I have spent the majority of the spring season indoors and out of the line of fire. After years of dreading spring, I decided to fight back.

Here are a few tips that have helped me.

Irrigate. Your nose, that is. Nasal irrigation is a part of one's daily routine in India and Southeast Asia. Look for a neti pot (looks like a little teapot) or nasal saline spray.

Take a shower. Pollen can really accumulate in your hair and on your skin. I find that if I take a shower before bed, my sinuses are clearer, making it easier to sleep.

Avoid peak pollen times. Stay inside from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you exercise outside, do it early in the morning, when pollen counts are lowest.

Shampoo your pet. Pollen can cling to your pet. Get a spring haircut for Fido and wash indoor/outdoor pets often. Keeping your pet out of your bedroom and off furniture can also be helpful.

Start cleaning. Do a thorough cleaning or, better yet, pay someone else to do it. Windows, screens and furnace filters collect mold and dust throughout the season, which can provoke your symptoms.

Go on an anti-inflammation diet. When you are suffering from allergies, your nose is already inflamed. Avoid eating foods that will cause more inflammation, such as sugar. (This is a good incentive to cut back on your sugar intake.)

Limit your dairy intake. Many doctors believe that dairy products increase mucus production, which can agitate and provoke allergy symptoms.

I hope you find these tips helpful. Make sure you consult with your physician before starting any new health program. ☐

Deborah Herlax Enos, CN, (www.deborahenos.com) is the author of *Weight a Minute! Transform Your Health in 60 Seconds a Day*. She regularly appears on NBC, ABC and FOX News.

Little pitchers have big fears

What parents need to know about pitch counts

By Star Lawrence

SINCE 2006, KEEPING track of the number of pitches thrown has been a rule in Little League.

Why? Research done at the American Sports Medicine Institute (ASMI) in Birmingham, Alabama, shows that all pitches, even in practice sessions, count toward stressing young, growing muscles and pulling joints in stressful directions.

A one-year study at ASMI reviewed 172 pitchers between the ages of 9 and 12 and found that 40 percent had elbow injuries. Around the same time, an American Academy of Pediatrics study showed that half of the 15 million to 18 million youth sports injuries were from overuse. Additionally, other research showed that stressing the growth plates in developing kids could stunt growth and produce painful and damaged joints.

"Baseball is year-round now," says Kevin D. Plancher, M.D., clinical associate professor at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City. He started seeing a lot of elbow pain in young ballplayers in the 1990s.

At first, it was thought that throwing "junk"—curveballs, changeups and sliders—instead of fastballs contributed more to throwing-arm injuries. Then the research began to indict the number of throws, as well as types of pitches.

In response, Little League and USA Baseball developed "safe numbers." Pitches per day for kids age 7 to 8 was set at 50; for age 9 to 10, 75. At age 17 to 18, 105 pitches in a day would be allowed. Rest and recovery periods were also suggested—e.g., pitching more than 61 throws in a day should be followed by three days off the field.

What can conscientious parents do? Plancher says, "Become familiar with the rules on pitch types and counts." If you want your child to be in the sport for the distance (or the scholarship), limit play to nine months a year at most. Urge cross-training in other sports. Have your child ice his or her elbow after every game. If an elbow or muscle hurts longer than three days, see a sports medicine specialist.

On a cautionary note, a famous name is now associated with these conditions when they are at their worst: Tommy John, the former Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher. "Tommy John surgery" replaces an elbow ligament with a tendon taken from somewhere else in the body.

Hundreds of Tommy Johns are now performed on high-schoolers. "This is baseball," sighs Plancher. "It's supposed to be fun." ☐

Star Lawrence is a medical journalist based in the Phoenix area.



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MEDIA BAKERY

Packing for every situation with an eye on etiquette

By Marybeth Bond

NO MATTER HOW well traveled you are, it's always a challenge to figure out how to dress in different situations. Clothing that is considered normal at home may be inappropriate elsewhere. For example, baseball caps, sweatshirts and sweatpants can identify you, in some countries, as an unsophisticated foreigner who has no sense of the local culture.

What you pack depends on where you're traveling. For instance, many churches in Europe and South America frown upon visitors wearing shorts and/or low-cut, halter-neck or midriff-baring tops.

If you wish to visit a palace or temple in Bangkok, you must have your shoulders, knees and heels covered to show respect. If you're wearing a tank top, shorts or sandals, you won't be allowed in.

In many areas of the Middle East it's not a "must" to cover up, but it is respectful to the local culture. Conservative attire that helps you blend in is always appropriate.

Here are a few etiquette items travelers should be sure to pack.

■ A shawl-size scarf—warm and practically weightless—is a woman's best friend, and can act as a head or shoulder cover-up for

visiting religious sites, as well as double as a wrap and a beach cover-up.

■ Khaki-colored or black clothing doesn't show dirt as readily as light colors and allows you to blend in when you visit bazaars. Conspicuous clothing or jewelry attracts attention and should be avoided. It's also easier to mix and match if you pack fewer colors.

■ The protocol-perfect wardrobe includes one black top, one black skirt or pants, one black dress, one black jacket or sweater, one pair of black shoes. It's better to be overdressed than underdressed if you are going to be entertained.

■ Closed-toe shoes are recommended for reasons having to do with safety, cleanliness and decorum. At five-star hotels the staff generally look down upon guests wearing flip-flops (except to the spa or poolside). In many developing countries the streets are dirty and it's easy to trip on uneven pavement and get hurt.

■ Men traveling to Latin countries: shine your shoes. It's a sign of wealth and respect. ☺

Costco member Marybeth Bond is a National Geographic author. Visit her blog at GutsyTraveler.com.

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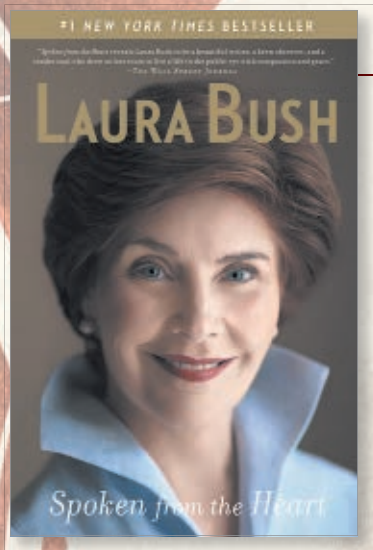


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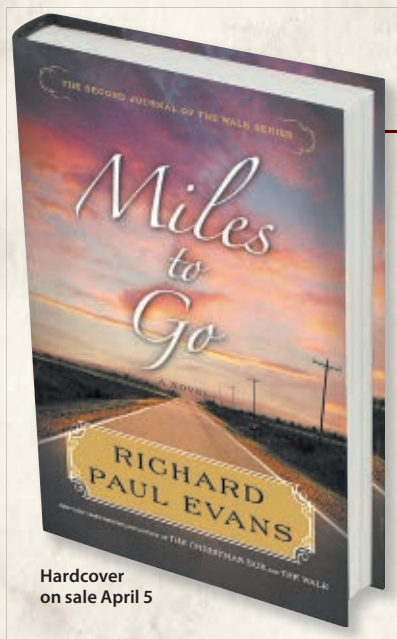


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Renowned interior designer Alexandra Moreland thought life couldn't get any worse after her toddler Matthew vanished in Central Park. That was two years ago and now, somehow, her life continues on its downward spiral when she is indicted for identity theft, fingered as a "person of interest" in the murder of a woman she hardly knew. Could someone be out to destroy both her sanity and her life? Don't miss **I'll Walk Alone** (Simon & Schuster), new from master storyteller Mary Higgins Clark.

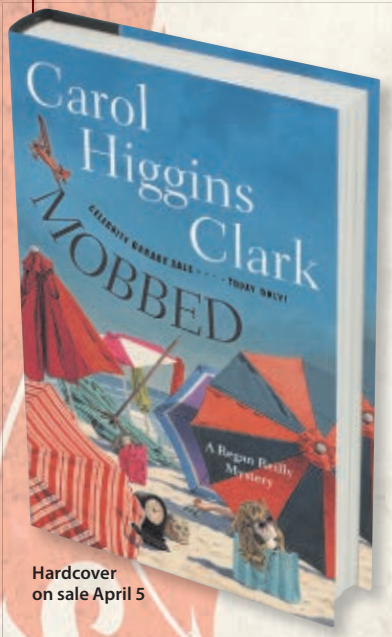
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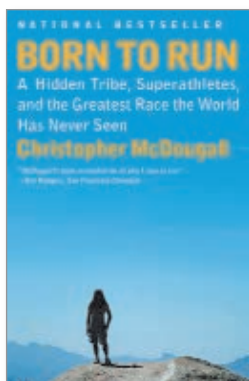
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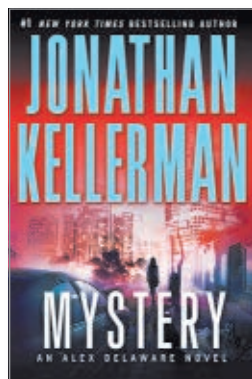
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Award-winning journalist Chris McDougal was an avid runner but was also frequently injured. So he set out to Mexico's Copper Canyons, the home of the Tarahumara Indians, who have the ability to run hundreds of miles without rest or injury, in the hope of discovering their secrets. McDougal's journey and his discoveries will change the way you look at putting one foot in front of the other in **Born to Run** (Vintage).



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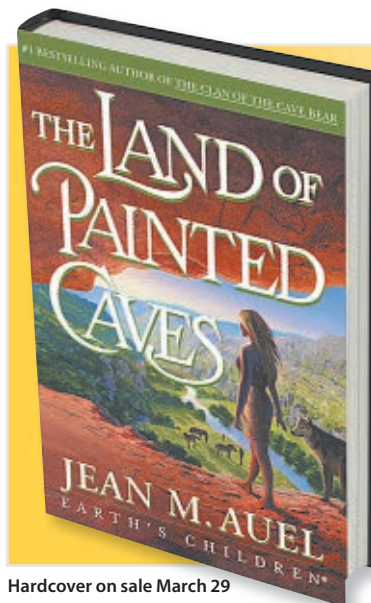


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PURE L.A. NOIR

Alex Delaware spots a breathtaking but lonely woman sipping a martini in a corner of the Fauborg Hotel in Beverly Hills. Two days later, she's found brutally murdered. But with no DNA match, the woman remains as mysterious in death as she seemed in life. And as Alex chases dark secrets in the streets of L.A., he realizes that his new case may not just be impossible. It may be fatal (Ballantine Books).

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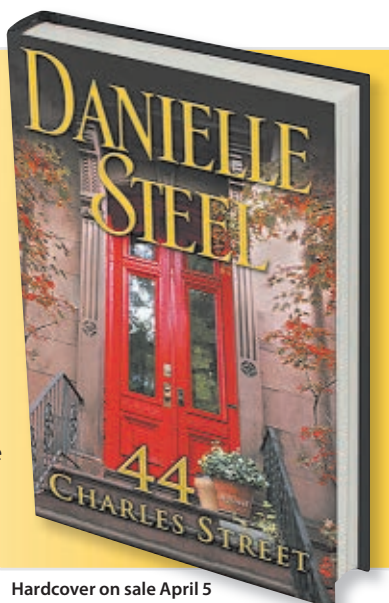
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Katie Couric assembles the world's most accomplished leaders, thinkers and artists for a collection of life lessons and advice that is at once amusing and empowering. From Steven Spielberg and Malcolm Gladwell to Sheryl Crow, Drew Brees and more come lessons about hard work and following your dream. Along the way, Katie offers her own sage council and guidance in **The Best Advice I Ever Got** (Random House).

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Newly single, Francesca Thayer weighs her financial options and decides she must take in boarders in her Greenwich Village townhouse. Soon, a magical transformation takes place as strangers become roommates, roommates become friends and friends become a family in master storyteller Danielle Steel's latest, **44 Charles Street** (Delacorte Press).



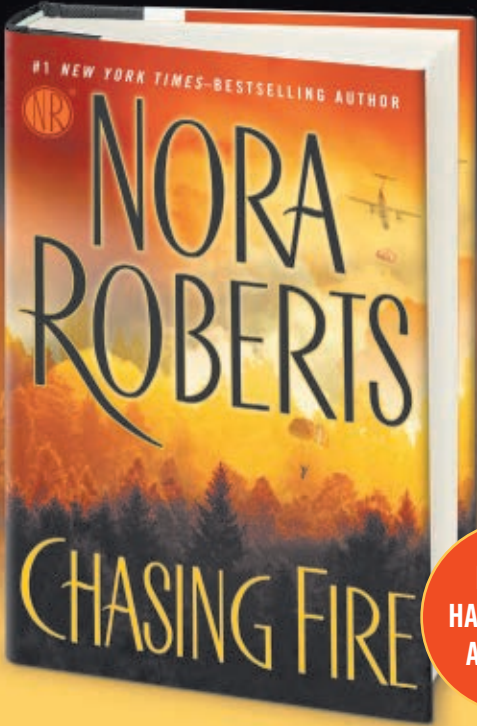
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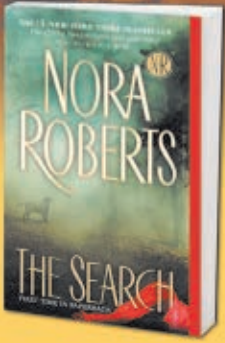
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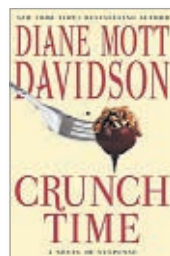
TALES OF LIFE AND DEATH—AND THE TRIUMPH OF THE SPIRIT.

A daughter attempts to discover her heritage and uncover how she became a **Secret Daughter** (Avon).

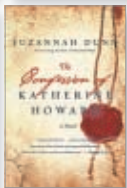
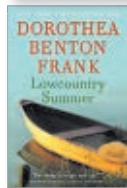
In **Impatient with Desire** (Voice), the stunning tale of the Donner Party unfolds through the eyes of Tamsen Donner, wife of the party's leader.

Dorothea Benton Frank delivers the long-awaited sequel to *Plantation* in **Lowcountry Summer** (Avon).

Cat Tilney witnesses history when she serves as a lady-in-waiting to Henry VIII's fifth queen in **The Confession of Katherine Howard** (HarperPaperbacks).



Hardcover
on sale April 5



Paperbacks available mid-April

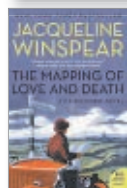
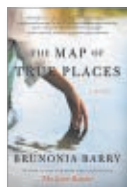
THE WORLD COMES ALIVE WITH THE TURN OF A PAGE.

Young Zee watched helplessly as her mother committed suicide. Now a therapist, Zee must relive that horror through the eyes of a patient in **The Map of True Places** (Harper).

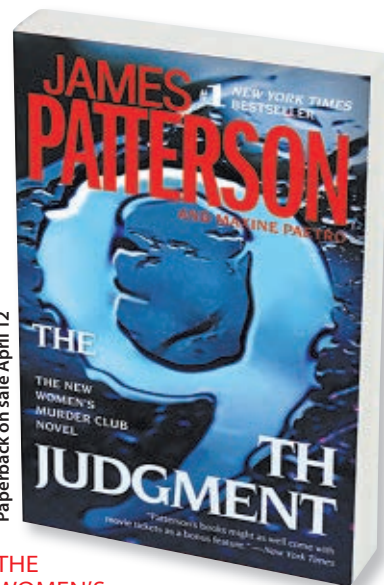
In 1942 a Russian woman travels to the United States on a goodwill mission—but she actually has orders to spy on first lady Eleanor Roosevelt in **Beautiful Assassin** (HarperPerennial).

When a young cartographer is killed in 1932, no one knows if it was murder or an accident. Don't miss **The Mapping of Love and Death** (HarperPerennial).

Gifted college student Nicole was killed in a car accident. Or was she? Many mysteries lurk in **The Raising** (HarperPerennial).



Paperbacks available early April



Paperback on sale April 12

THE WOMEN'S MURDER CLUB IS BACK—AND THE STAKES ARE HIGHER THAN EVER.

A killer ruthlessly targets women and children. Meanwhile, a high-stakes burglar terrorizes the richest and most powerful in Hollywood. Both of these crimes are somehow connected, and only the Women's Murder Club has the potential to bring a stop to either in **The 9th Judgment** (Grand Central Publishing), the latest heart-stopping thriller from worldwide best-selling author James Patterson!

An author's education

A character and her creator search for knowledge in the maelstrom of the Civil War

By Stephanie E. Ponder

DURING A TWO-week stretch of beautiful summer weather in 2002, Robin Oliveira heard a mountain thrush singing outside her Pacific Northwest home. While listening to the bird's plaintive song and contemplating the upcoming rainy season, Oliveira had a vision of a woman in period dress looking through a microscope in a room filled with books. The need to find out that woman's story led to this month's Book Buyer's Pick, the historical novel *My Name Is Mary Sutter*.

Since the early 1990s Oliveira had wondered if she could write a book. So, on her son's first day of kindergarten, she sat down at the computer for two hours and tried to write a paragraph. "Which I found to be among the most difficult things I've tried to do in my life," Oliveira, a Costco member, tells *The Connection*.

The statement is nearly unbelievable considering that Oliveira had already earned degrees in Russian and nursing—and spent the previous seven years working as a critical-care nurse.

She spent the next decade teaching herself how to write. The New York native started by taking classes at a community college and moved on to an extension program at the University of Washington in Seattle. By the time she graduated from that program she had "written a novel and had several short stories rejected," she says.

She found an agent who submitted the manuscript to only a few publishers before dropping Oliveira. "At that point I thought, there's something I don't know yet. I could tell," she says. "[So] I

decided to get an MFA [master of fine arts degree], thinking that if there were things that I just knew, I could probably write the story that was in my head."

By that time she'd begun work on the novel that would become *My Name Is Mary Sutter*, but none of that original material made it into the final novel.



Robin Oliveira

The novel's central character, Mary, is a talented midwife determined to become a doctor. Her quest is both aided and complicated by the recently started Civil War. When she leaves home looking for a doctor willing to teach her, she is faced with both the emotional and physical effects of the war.

Oliveira didn't just take time to learn about the craft of writing. After realizing that her vision was of a woman during the Civil War, she set out to learn about that era, which she knew nothing about.

"I think one of the reasons I have three degrees is because I love school. There's so much to know; there's so much to learn. For me that's part of writing historical fiction: I'm forced to learn about things I didn't know," she explains.

Her quest for information took her to the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Because she is driven by a need to get the details right, all of the documents she cites—including train schedules—are copied from the originals.

What most fascinated Oliveira—and helped define the main character's story arc—was the primitive state of medicine at the time. "I had no idea that it was the war that catapulted medicine as far as it did," she says.

As she dug deeper, she began to recognize wider themes. Even though she didn't set out to include historic figures, such as Abraham Lincoln, she soon realized he was essential to her story. "I thought the two themes reflected well on one another: Lincoln's maturation as a president and a commanding general, and Mary's ability to assert herself and effect change—as well as [advances in] the medical field," she says.

These days Oliveira is working on another book. She's leery of saying anything about it other than it's another work of historical fiction—and likely driven by strong characters.

"I don't see historical fiction as history texts masquerading as novel. I'm at all times trying to avoid the 3-by-5-card paragraph where you sort of explain things," she says. "When it comes down to it, all a reader cares about is the characters and what they're going to get." □



DID YOU KNOW that this year marks the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War? I hadn't given it much thought until I read this month's book pick, Robin Oliveira's debut novel, *My Name Is Mary Sutter*.

I've never been what you might call a history buff, but Mary Sutter is such a well-crafted and interesting character that I was immediately drawn into her life and determination to pursue a career in medicine.

It's fascinating to look back and see how far medicine has advanced—along with women's careers in the field. Oliveira also succeeds in examining the implications of being driven to achieve one's goals to the exclusion of all other obligations.

When you combine such a strong character with thorough research, you get a historical novel that educates while it engages.

For more book picks, see page 59.

Signed book giveaway

COSTCO HAS 50 SIGNED COPIES of Robin Oliveira's *My Name Is Mary Sutter* to give away. For a chance to win, send an e-mail with your name and mailing address to giveaway@costco.com, with "Robin Oliveira" in the subject line. Or print your name, address and daytime phone number on a postcard or letter and send it to: Robin Oliveira, *The Costco Connection*, P.O. Box 34088, Seattle, WA 98124-1088.

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Pennie Clark Ianniciello,
Costco book buyer

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WAREHOUSE ONLY

Clan mother

An interview with the creator of *Earth's Children*

By Pennie Clark Ianiciello

MORE THAN THREE decades ago, Jean M. Auel had an idea for a short story about a woman who looked completely different from everyone else around her. In trying to figure out who and where the woman was, Auel soon had an outline for a six-novel series that started with *The Clan of the Cave Bear* and ended with the recently published *The Land of Painted Caves*. More than 45 million copies of her books have sold worldwide.

The series begins 30,000 years ago when 5-year-old Ayla is separated from her family. She's taken in by a group of Neanderthals who refer to the blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl as one of "the others." In the latest (and last!) installment, the Ice Age heroine, now 27, realizes it's time to strike a balance between being a mother to her daughter and a loving mate to Jondalar, while pursuing the knowledge and power of Jondalar's people.

In early February 2011, I had the extreme pleasure of talking with Auel and her husband, Ray. It was a mere two weeks before Auel's 75th birthday and a 10-day trip to London, where she was to meet with foreign reporters to discuss the new book.

I admit this may not be your standard Q&A, but Auel isn't your average writer—or woman, for that matter.

Pennie Clark Ianiciello: Were you ready for how your life changed after the success of *The Clan of the Cave Bear*?

Jean M. Auel: I was 40; I knew what life was. I wasn't going to be like some rock stars who believe their own hype.

PCI: Have you ever gone back and reread your novels?

JMA: Not after publication, but when I'm working I write and rewrite and then reread it. Then I edit it and have to reread it. Then it's

The Costco Connection

The Land of Painted Caves and earlier titles in the *Earth's Children* series are available in most Costco warehouses.



Costco book buyer Pennie Clark Ianiciello (left) talks with author Jean M. Auel.

copyedited and I reread it. I check everything. It's my work and I have to stay on top of it.

PCI: Do you consider yourself an expert [in archaeology]?

JMA: I'm a novelist who does good research.

PCI: What have been the pleasant surprises along the way? I've heard that you've become friends with several archaeologists.

JMA: I've been on digs where it's just the archaeologists and me. I've been to a very many caves, including the three prominent ones: Lascaux, Chauvet and Altamira. If I think about Lascaux too hard it still brings tears to my eyes. Archaeologist Jean Clottes was asked about my books and he said, "It could have happened."

PCI: That's a great compliment. You're obviously steeped in research. How has what you've learned shown up in the books?

JMA: In the first book Ayla has an amulet with several things in it. I read about a discovery where several objects that didn't seem to belong together were found together. There was a mammoth ivory disc stained with red ochre and black manganese dioxide, both coloring agents. I don't know what they were used for, but I included that in the story.

PCI: Listening to your stories, I can't help but think about all of the famous people you must know.

JMA: Just because I met James Earl Jones doesn't mean I know him. I did meet Tom Selleck, and he's still a hunk.

Ray Auel: Bruce Willis kissed her on the mouth. We were at the bottom of the Hoover Dam and Jean was late. When she was introduced as the woman who wrote *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, he kissed her.

JMA: [Willis] was just a little overwhelmed, and I think that was the only way he could think to express it.

PCI: Maybe it's a sore subject, but I want to ask about the film version of *The Clan of the Cave Bear* that came out in the '80s.

JMA: [Blows a raspberry and makes the thumbs-down gesture.]

PCI: A lot of movies are remade these days.

JMA: We'll sign the rights over to our children. They can do with them what they want.

PCI: It's still more than a month before the [new] book comes out, but the buzz is strong.

JMA: I got a starred review in *Kirkus Review*. My agent called and read it to me. I'm always surprised that people like [my books].

PCI: Is there anything else you'd like people to know about the new book or the journey you've been on?

JMA: One of these days I'm going to wake up and realize I've reached the end. [Ayla] is like a friend I won't see anymore.

PCI: Now that this series has come to an end, do you have more stories in you?

JMA: I think that as long as I'm alive and able, I'll continue to write. [G]

Kids!

books & more



Kids' pick!

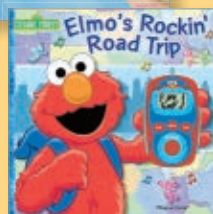
Melissa McMeekin,
assistant buyer, books

"Kids: They dance before they learn there is anything that isn't music." ~William Stafford

KIDS LOVE MUSIC. Whether it's their favorite characters or the beautiful clanging of pots and pans, young children will dance to just about anything. This month, Publications International brings you books with innovative sounds that kids love.

Thomas the Train and Disney's Cars come to life with stereo speakers that get kids revved up. Or they can sing and dance along with lovable Disney princesses and Elmo, using their very own digital music player that follows along with the story. Listen, learn and loosen up with these fabulous interactive books!

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KIDS HAVE THE WRITE STUFF!

Write on, wipe off—all with kids' favorite characters! These storybooks teach while entertaining with fun stories. Choose from **Elmo Sees Shapes**, **Fisher Price Animals All Around** and **Dora the Explorer: Busy Day** (Reader's Digest Children's Books).

Hardcovers
available mid April



A TIME YOU'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER

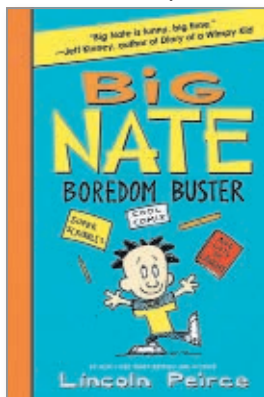
Story time forms a special bond with a child.

Make it a time you'll cherish forever with the *Tell Me a Story* line of wonderful children's books. Each one is filled with four timeless stories you'll enjoy reading over and over again—and kids will love listening to! Look for **Father Loves His Little One**; **Mother Loves Her Little One**; **Grandparents Love Their Little Ones**; and **I Love You, My Little One** (Carson Dellosa Publishing) and find the stories that express just how you to feel to a special child.



Padded hardcovers
available mid April

Hardcover on sale April 4



Hardcover available now

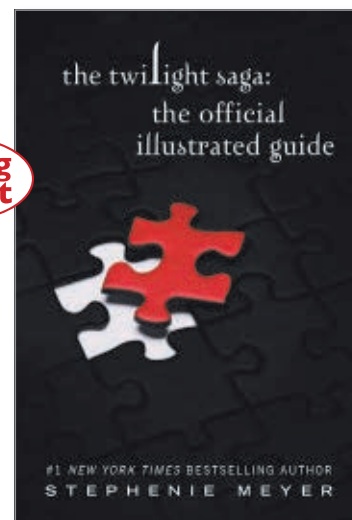
HERE COMES TROUBLE—BIG NATE STYLE!

Kids! Are you tired of being bored? Looking for something exciting to save you from things like homework? Let your friend Big Nate show you the way to have fun in **Big Nate Boredom Buster** (HarperCollins), new from Lincoln Peirce. Plus, there's plenty more fun to be had in **Big Nate Strikes Again** and **Big Nate: In a Class by Himself**.

READY FOR MORE TWILIGHT?

Explore everything *Twilight* related in this official guide to the series, featuring an encyclopedia of knowledge! Stephenie Meyer's beloved best-selling series is a worldwide phenomenon, and now you can get inside it like never before with **The Twilight Saga: The Official Illustrated Guide** (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers), a reference jam-packed with charts, maps, character profiles and so much more!

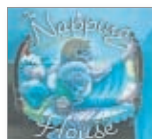
Young
adult



Hardcover on sale April 12

SO MUCH TO READ, SO MUCH TO LEARN!

Not only are these four colorful board books sturdy enough to stand up to toddlers, these critically acclaimed picture books come from top children's book creators! Check out the vibrant, delightful fun in **Time for Bed**, **The Napping House**, **Piggies** and **Sheep in a Jeep** (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books).



Board books available early April

LEARN FROM LADYBUG GIRL

Lulu is a special little girl who loves to dress up! And when she does, she gets into all sorts of fun adventures that help her learn, understand the world around her and make good friends. The *New York Times* best-selling series includes **Ladybug Girl**, **Ladybug Girl and Bumblebee Boy**, **Ladybug Girl at the Beach** and **Ladybug Girl and the Bug Squad** (Dial).



Hardcovers
available now



tions that cover glass, beads, fiber, paper and more. Best of all, the presentation feels accessible and no-nonsense. So if you need me, I'll be knitting or beading or paper quilling or

—Jonna Erickson
assistant buyer, books

Favorite Recipes of Home Economic Teachers series, from FRP. The titles in this series, including *Meats*, *Casseroles*, *Salads*, *Vegetables* and *Desserts*, are slightly revised versions of the original 1965 publications. While I adore the nostalgic feel of these cookbooks, I'm over the moon about the sheer quantity of fantastic recipes. Each book contains more than 2,000 recipes culled from actual home-ec teachers. If getting back to basics is something you've been wanting to do, these books are a great place to start.

—Melissa McMeekin
assistant buyer, books

Bossypants, by Tina Fey. It's been my experience that autobiographies can be dry at times. This couldn't be further from the truth in the case of Fey's memoir. She infuses her journey through show business with the razor-sharp wit and good-natured humor that have made her one of the funniest comedians of our time. Call me bossy if you will, but if you've ever enjoyed the comedy stylings of the for-

mer *Saturday Night Live* head writer, or you are a fan of the Emmy Award-winning series *30 Rock*, I say read this book.

—Jeffrey Purtell
inventory control specialist, books

JUVENILE

Giant Sticker Activity Pads, from Artistic Studios Ltd. My kids love stickers, and since one of my favorite things to do is play with my kids, I love stickers. With these large-format sticker pads, I can lie on the floor with my two boys and place, remove and replace stickers for hours. These sticker pads feature more than 1,000 removable stickers, 15 interactive play scenes and 25 pages to design. The three themes available are Disney fairies, Disney princesses and Pixar.

—Josh Lilly
inventory control specialist, books



April Book buyers' picks

NONFICTION

Craft Wisdom & Know-How: Everything You Need to Know to Stitch, Sculpt, Bead and Build, from the editors of Lark Books. Regular readers of this page may have picked up on the fact that I'm into all kinds of crafts. What I love about this book is that it's an all-purpose reference for a variety of hobbies. Filled with detailed illustrations covering skills and projects, it is divided into 10 sec-

BOOK PHOTOS: FRANCE FREEMAN

New releases

street dates

April 5

The Fifth Witness,
by Michael Connelly

I'll Walk Alone,
by Mary Higgins-Clark

Unlimited, by Jilian Michaels

44 Charles Street,
by Danielle Steel

April 12

The Twilight Saga: The Official Illustrated Guide,
by Stephenie Meyer

The 9th Judgment,
by James Patterson

Big Nate Boredom Buster,
by Lincoln Peirce

Chasing Fire,
by Nora Roberts

April 19

The Sixth Man,
by David Baldacci



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RANDIE ST. NICHOLAS

Left to right: Jerry Douglas, Dan Tyminski, Alison Krauss, Barry Bales and Ron Block.

Beyond bluegrass

By Will Fife

TRADITIONALLY, BLUEGRASS groups haven't enjoyed blockbuster success in the music industry. But then, Alison Krauss & Union Station (AKUS) is not a traditional bluegrass group. Since their 1989 release, *Two Highways*, the group's recording repertoire has ranged from popular rock songs to country music hits to straight-up bluegrass that would make Bill Monroe (the father of bluegrass) beam with pride.

On *Paper Airplane*, the group's new release, for example, they've recorded Jackson Browne's "My Opening Farewell," a song with which Browne fans will be familiar. In the AKUS version, the song's basic structure and melody are unchanged, but complex guitar lines and a zesty Dobro (resonator guitar) solo completely transform the feel of Browne's song. And at the center of the tune, Krauss' ethereal, clear voice delivers Browne's sage lyrics with such beauty it seems as if they were written just for her.

The Costco Connection

Paper Airplane is scheduled to be available at most Costco warehouses on April 12.

Alison Krauss & Union Station connect listeners with the flavors of bluegrass music

This is typical of AKUS albums. And if, like me, you've never been especially fond of bluegrass, it's hard not to rethink your stance on the genre.

"We've been around a long time," Alison Krauss tells *The Connection* via phone in a recent interview. "Because of what we have been doing in bluegrass music, people [such as Robert Plant and Brad Paisley] wanted to try working with me. That's not something I've tried to make happen. But musicians have a real love of traditional music."

Indeed, Krauss has had a busy career. She signed with Rounder Records when she was 14 and released her first album, *Different Strokes*, which also features her brother, bassist Viktor Krauss. All told, she's released 12 studio albums—seven with Union Station and five solo recordings. In addition to producing her own albums, Krauss has pro-

duced three albums for country music's Cox Family and two for the acoustic trio Nickel Creek. She has sung and played on recordings by artists as diverse as Bad Company, Emmylou Harris, Michael McDonald, Brad Paisley, the Chieftains, Kris Kristofferson and Phish.

Her contributions on the soundtracks of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, *Cold Mountain* and, more recently, *Get Low*, are said to have renewed public interest in bluegrass music. For her labors, Krauss has won 55 awards, including 27 Grammys, the most of any female artist.

Krauss is not the only vocalist in AKUS, however. Anyone who saw *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* will recognize the vocals of Dan Tyminski, who sang "I Am a Man of Constant Sorrow" in AKUS recordings. Tyminski's voice adds variety to the group's songs. Besides Tyminski, Union Station consists of Barry Bales on stand-up bass, banjoist and guitarist Ron Block, and distinctive Dobro player Jerry Douglas.

It's difficult to imagine another group with a musical palate as diverse as AKUS.

"My parents were into all kinds of music, whether it was Hank Williams Sr. or Dixieland music or Peter, Paul and Mary. They just had very open minds," Krauss says. "Growing up, I listened to a lot of top-40 radio. I liked AC/DC and Lynyrd Skynyrd and Foreigner and all that stuff, while at the same time listening to Ricky Skaggs. I didn't have any kind of bias. I liked musicals as well. My mom would take me to dress rehearsals at the University of Illinois [Krauss was raised in Champaign, where the university is located] and we would watch the operas. I got a lot of exposure to all different kinds of stuff."

When she's not working, Krauss says, she likes to keep things light. "I wind up listening to a lot of funk, which I've always enjoyed. I love Cameo and Betty Davis, Miles Davis' wife. She is amazing, and her music was way ahead of its time. I keep it pretty groovy." She stops speaking for a moment. Then, with the wit she's famous for, she continues in a monotone voice, "Listen to how white I am: 'I like to keep that funk music going there. Yes I do,'" laughing at herself.

Whether they're playing traditional bluegrass or interpreting songs from other genres, Alison Krauss & Union Station have helped many Americans to connect with bluegrass and its rich musical tradition.

Two Fantastic Adventures



WALDEN MEDIA

PG AVAILABLE 4/8/11

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Mad Men: © MMX Lions Gate Television Inc. All Rights Reserved.



amc

LIONSGATE (NYSE: LGF)

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PHOTOS: COURTESY PARAMOUNT HOME ENTERTAINMENT



As Alice Ward (far left), in *The Fighter*, Melissa Leo is the mother of two sons, played by Mark Wahlberg (above left) and Christian Bale (second from right).

An act of faith

For Melissa Leo, acting is about overcoming fear

By J. Rentilly

BEFORE THIS YEAR'S Oscar ceremonies, you might not have known Melissa Leo by name. You may not even know her by face. That's only because she's so good at her job that she almost literally disappears inside the roles she plays. An actor's actor and dedicated crafts-person, Leo has offered powerful, uncompromising, chameleon-like turns in films and television series such as *Homicide: Life on the Streets*, *21 Grams*, HBO's critically acclaimed series *Treme* and David O. Russell's powerhouse *The Fighter*, based on the real-life story of boxer Mickey Ward, for which Leo won this year's Best Supporting Actress Oscar.

Leo refers to herself as a myth buster, a woman over 50 enjoying the best time and work of her life. As for the massive haul of hardware she's earned for playing the swell-hearted, sucker-punching matriarch Alice Ward in *The Fighter*, including an award from the Screen Actors Guild and a Golden Globe, Leo's delighted. "It's funny, because I'm just now taking a wood stove out of my apartment in New York and putting in a fireplace," she told *The Connection* a few weeks before winning her Oscar. "I'm looking for a beautiful mantel right now, as luck would have it."

The Costco Connection: You've said that love is about overcoming fear. That's apparent in your characters.

Melissa Leo: Acting is about overcoming fear. That's one of the most enriching things about the life of an actor. You can't do it unless you face the scariest corners of the body and soul.

Walking this life all these years, I see that lesson all over in humanity. To be down in New Orleans and doing a show like *Treme*, or to be in Boston and do a film like *The Fighter*—these really are people working to overcome fear to find love. I can live with that line of work.

CC: How do you approach the characters you play? The range is vast, the women very different from who you are.

ML: The process is the same, really, for any character I play, but the chasm to cross for someone like Alice Ward was, I felt at the time, so much wider than most. She is very different from me, but not so different from my grandmother, as it turns out. We [are all] so busy moving forward that we don't always remember what we've just been through. Alice, like my grandmother, is a woman from a different time. That was my connection. I've read roles and known I was right for them. I've taken roles that I've felt I was wrong for. But you take the work and you do the work: What does she look like? What does she say? What do others say about her? And then there's the very private work: What motivates her? You have to get to that motivation so that you can be righteous about the characters you play.

CC: Do you take that work home with you?

ML: Acting is my hallowed religion and faith. I'm not making a movie to enjoy the teacart or make friends or second-guess what the next shot should be. I'm there to portray a human being. I find the closer I remain with that

human being, the better the work. After that last "cut" is called, I begin to molecularly restructure into little old me, and the time between roles is embarrassingly dull and slovenly. What I do when I don't work would have most people call me a lazy so-and-so. Until I find the next gal to play.

CC: With *The Fighter*, you were surrounded by tough guys: Mark Wahlberg, Christian Bale, David O. Russell. Yet you hold your own.

ML: I'm a scrapper. [Laughs] I've won again and again with this character, even without the awards. I'll never forget the first time [the real Alice Ward] came to the set and saw me all dolled up, and she pinched my elbow and said in a thick Boston accent, "You look good."

CC: Your passion for the work is palpable, but I'm guessing you've been able to kick up your heels a bit this year. Some of these fancy awards parties must have been a good time, right?

ML: I'm thinking of a dessert tray they brought out at one of the parties. [Laughs] The food is amazing. I have one friend who comes along with me to these parties sometimes, because if there's a shrimp tray, she really likes it. [Laughs] We've had so much fun! I'm looking back on this year, and I'm laughing. I have to laugh. 📺

J. Rentilly is a Los Angeles-based journalist.



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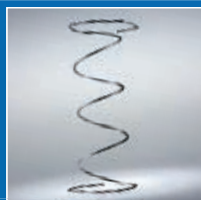
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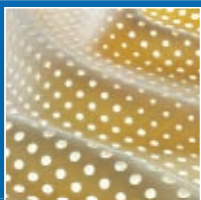
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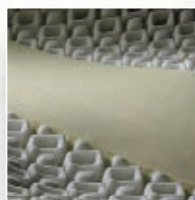
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Jacki (left) and Jay Givens are repairing cars while saving money and minimizing their company's environmental impact.

Driving change

Family-owned collision repair shop going green

By Sarah van Schagen

COSTCO MEMBERS Jay and Jacki Givens are in the business of restoration. As owners of Givens Collision Repair Center in Frederick, Maryland, the husband-and-wife team have spent the last 13 years repairing busted-up BMWs and fenderless Fords—all with an eye toward restoring the health of the planet.

The business started in 1997 as a part-time venture while Jay worked full time selling paint systems to body-shop owners and teaching them how to be more efficient.

From the beginning, the duo was committed to being as green as possible, recycling and reusing everything they could. But, as a member of the industry, Jay saw the eco-friendly paint products being used on cars that were coming out of the factory and knew that he and Jacki could do more.

"We've always been a forward-thinking family," Jacki tells *The Connection*. "We didn't take the cheapest route, we didn't take the easiest route, but we took the route that we felt that we needed to take in order to be a benchmark facility."

Breaking new ground

In August 2008, they broke ground on a 17,000-square-foot building featuring office space, a conference room and teaching facility, and space for 50 auto-size works in progress.

The facility is specially equipped to spray Waterborne products, high-quality water-based paints that release half the toxins of solvent-based paint products.

Strategically placed windows and sky-

lights let natural light flood into the facility, often eliminating the need to switch on the high-efficiency lights. Other eco-minded upgrades are easiest to spot in the finance department: High-efficiency heat pumps and insulation have led to "phenomenal savings," Jacki says.

All told, the Givenses are paying less than half what they did at their old facility, despite having doubled the size of their space and adding an air-conditioning unit. They hope to one day install solar panels on the roof, which could cut costs even more.

Green for green's sake

But it's not all about saving money. During construction of the new facility, the Givenses had a BaySaver filtration system installed underground to clean and filter any groundwater leaving their property before it reaches Chesapeake Bay. It was a \$185,000 endeavor that will never see a monetary return.

"There has definitely been a lot of good that has come out of it that I don't think we'll ever be able to put a dollar figure on," Jacki says. "But you've got to lay your head down at night and know that you're doing things the right way—that means a lot to us."

It means a lot to employees, too. "I think it's pretty neat ... to know that they care enough to make sure that the water that's getting down to the water treatment plant isn't going to affect my kids," manager Rex Ransom says. "They're responsible for 18 people and 18 people's families, and they really take that seriously."

Body shops from all over the country, as well as green-minded insurance companies, have visited the state-of-the-art facility to learn more about what the Givenses have done, and the Givenses have received numerous awards for their efforts on behalf of the community.

"The sad thing is that the laws don't keep up with the green initiatives," Jay says. He's been working to change that by talking with legislators.

"We're proud of what we're doing," Jacki says, "and we're going to continue to do what we can—not just for us, but for our kids and our grandkids—to move not just our facility but our industry into a greener and cleaner arena." [E]

Sarah van Schagen is a freelance writer in Washington, D.C.

**member
profile**

Name:
Givens Collision Repair Center

Founded: September 1997

Founders/owners: Jay and Jacki Givens

Employees: 18

Address: 1529 Tilco Drive, Frederick, MD 21704

Phone: (301) 624-7920

Website: www.givenscollision.com

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WAREHOUSE ONLY

Conquering car clutter: a key to road safety



MEDIA BAKERY

By Wendy Helfenbaum

EVERY TIME YOU take your eyes off the road to reach for a cell phone, coffee mug or CD while driving, you are nine times more likely to cause an accident, according to a recent Virginia Tech Transportation Institute study.

Why are we reaching for things while driving? Because we can't find anything. For many of us, our cars have become the kitchen junk drawer on wheels. But driving in a cluttered car can be hazardous to your health. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 80 percent of car accidents involve distracted drivers, accounting for more than 6,000 deaths and half a million injuries in 2008.

Not only does rooting around for a piece of gum in an overstuffed glove compartment put you in danger, but loose objects such as umbrellas, water bottles or groceries can become deadly projectiles that could strike you or your passengers if you brake suddenly.

Between moms and dads chauffeuring kids to activities and a large mobile workforce, we're using our cars differently, and not in a good way, says professional organizer Collette Robicheau, owner of Organize Anything in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

"People are on the go, and the car is not looked upon as a priority," explains Robicheau. "But we have to remember that we're operating heavy equipment. Things [should be] readily accessible so we're not trying to do crazy things while we're driving."

Here are some easy ways to organize your car and put good routines into place.

Pick up a new habit: picking up

- Purge broken toys, old newspapers, food wrappers and seasonal gear.
- Designate a daily in/out bin: Keep it in your entranceway packed with items needed for your upcoming day, such as library books

to be returned. At the end of the day, pack your bin with stuff from the car that can go back in the house, such as empty water bottles, coffee cups and sports equipment.

- Hang a garbage bag off the back of the front seat or on the floor. Empty it every time you stop for gas.

Use spare time wisely

"Parents waiting to pick up children from activities can organize the back seat, take a peek at what's in the glove compartment or organize the trunk," suggests Robicheau.

Keep it simple with smart storage tools

- Visor organizers keep CDs at your fingertips.
- Over-the-seat totes or shoe bags are perfect for children's games, snacks or wipes.
- Stash a container under the front passenger seat for things you don't use every day, such as extra baseball hats or sunscreen.
- Purchase a console unit or portable file box to hold your mobile office.
- Put maps in side door pockets; car insurance, accident forms and owner's manual in the glove compartment; coins for tolls in the ashtray.

Secure loose objects

- Make sure cans of soda, tennis balls and toys are safely put away so they don't roll under the driver's foot pedals.

The Costco Connection

Most Costco warehouses and Costco.com carry car accessories and organizing supplies (bins, over-the-seat tote and litter bags, cup holders and consoles) to help you keep your car safe and clutter free.

- Secure bins of books, toys and papers in the back seat or trunk with Velcro or spring-cord cables, or stash them under seats to prevent items from flying forward.
- Use a cargo net in the trunk to contain groceries and sports equipment.

Junk in the trunk?

"Does that bag of hockey equipment need to live there [in the trunk]?" asks Robicheau. Keep emergency road supplies, such as jumper cables, flares, a flashlight and a first-aid kit, in a plastic bin. Get rid of whatever you don't need.

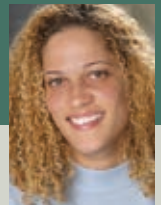
"Run your car the way you run your house," says Robicheau. "Think, 'Is this the right place for

me to be putting this?'" Keep your car organized so you can minimize distractions while you're driving. [E]

Wendy Helfenbaum is a writer and television producer in Montreal.

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When it's time to re-tire

Good tires can save you money and save your life

By Cary Lockwood

DRIVING ON WORN-OUT or low-grade tires is dangerous. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that more than 400 fatalities and 10,000 injuries occur each year due to tire failures.

If it's time for you to replace the tires on your car, Kurt Berger, the manager of consumer products engineering for Bridgestone Tire, offers several critical points to consider before you select your next set of tires.

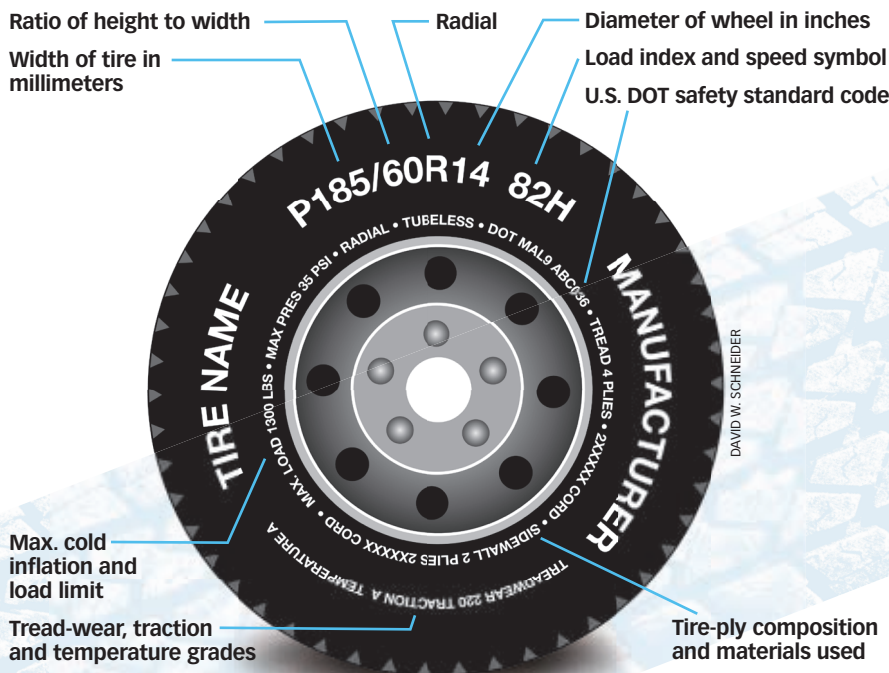
Tires with the same size and rating as the factory-equipped tires, Berger says, are an excellent choice when it's time to replace them. They offer the same braking, handling, traction, durability and load requirements your car was designed to provide. To maintain the vehicle's handling, traction and balance, tire replacement should be done in full sets.

Higher-grade tires use the latest technology in tread design and construction, providing optimum tread life, ride, traction, fuel economy and vehicle safety. These benefits suffer with a lesser-grade economy tire, especially where tread life and fuel economy are concerned. Cheap tires wind up costing drivers much more in the long term.

The type of tires you buy should be suited to the conditions of your environment. In harsher environments a mud and snow tire is much better suited for winter traction. All-terrain tires are designed with a thicker tread for off-road traction, but they come at the expense of high-speed handling. High-performance tires are superior for dry pavement traction and handling, but don't perform especially well in snow. All-season tires are designed to keep you on the road all year, but they don't perform as well in the snow as snow tires. There are trade-offs with each type of tire, so analyze the conditions you drive in.

If you're unsure about the tread life of your current tires (including your spare tire), visit a tire replacement facility and have them all inspected. With proper inspection, selection and care, your tires will provide you with many miles of safe traveling regardless of the climate and road conditions, and keep you safe on the road as you travel through the concrete jungle. [E]

Columnist Cary Lockwood has been in the auto industry for more than 30 years.



Maintaining your tires

INCORPORATING the following service tips into your automotive maintenance routine will help you and others on the road stay safe.

- Most tire failures occur when tires are underinflated, so check tire pressure weekly (including the spare).
- Use a high-quality digital or dial gauge for the most accurate tire pressure readings.
- Replace tires with premium-quality factory-recommended tires or equivalent replacements.
- Use the vehicle manufacturer's inflation specifications displayed on the car's door jamb label or in the owner's manual. These sources also note the proper tire sizes for your vehicle.
- Adjust the pressure accordingly when the tires are cold, because warmed-up and recently driven-on tires can experience air expansion, causing higher tire pressure readings.
- Look for any obvious signs of damage, such as sidewall cuts, bubbles, exposed cord or smooth patches between tread rows (called wear bars), that would call for tire replacement.
- If sudden changes in your vehicle's ride or handling develop, get a professional inspection immediately.
- Tire rotations should be performed every 6,000 to 8,000 miles (check your owner's manual). This is done by moving the rear tires to the front and the front tires to the rear, which maximizes uniform wear.
- Request a tire inspection at tire rotation time. This service is invaluable, as it may reveal other potential tire problems that are undetectable during a basic pressure check or evaluation.
- Tire age is an important consideration in determining tire replacement. As tires age, the bonding of internal components such as steel and polyester cord is prone to pull apart, causing tread separation. Close inspection of all tires (including the spare) more than five years old should occur annually, and tires 10 or more years beyond the date of manufacture must be replaced, as they are no longer deemed safe.—CL

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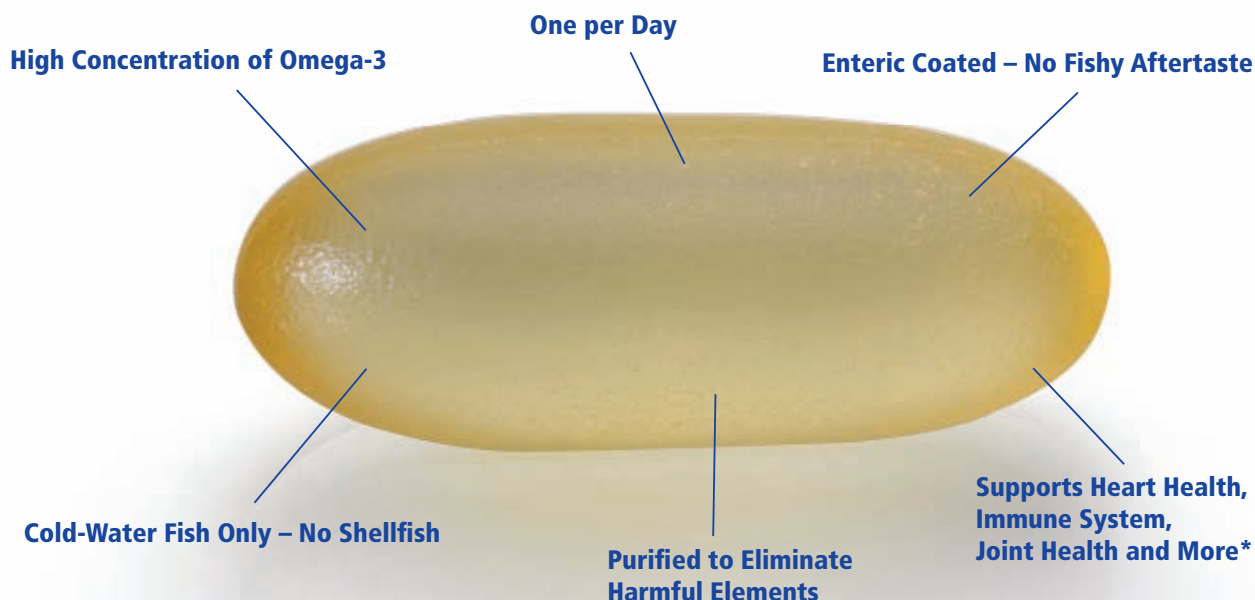
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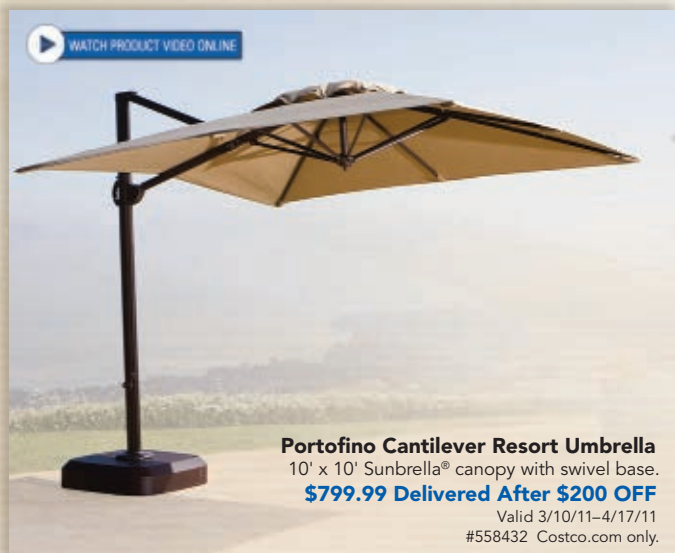
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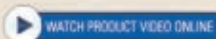
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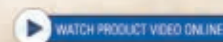
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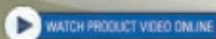
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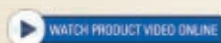


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USP has tested and verified this Kirkland Signature supplement for its ingredients, potency and manufacturing process. USP sets official standards for dietary supplements. See www.usp-dsvp.org.

Exclusively from Costco Wholesale

Costco Travel aims to be accommodating

By T. Foster Jones

WHEN YOU THINK of Costco Travel, you might think of cruises and vacation packages. But Costco Travel offers other great options with solid member savings. The hotel-only program, for instance, which includes Best Western and Hyatt, is a perfect solution for those who want to travel beyond the destinations where packages are offered or who don't need all the components of a package, with brands they trust and the savings they expect.

Hotel-only program

Most of Costco Travel's offerings do feature packages (accommodations, ground transportation and other elements bundled together), so the hotel-only program is unique in that it offers savings on lodging only.

"Our hotel-only program offers members savings on Hyatt hotels and resorts worldwide, and Best Western hotels in the U.S. and Canada," says Sarah Gaudet, buyer for Costco Travel. "Both brands are recognized and respected by American travelers, but there are levels of each brand that the average consumer probably doesn't know."

Hyatt hotels and resorts

Some think of Hyatt strictly as a luxury, high-end chain. While it certainly includes grand hotels and magnificent resorts, the parent company also is home to more affordable brands that provide a different experience but still one with great quality.

The Hyatt Regency and Grand Hyatt brands offer a world-class hotel experience.

The Hyatt Place and Hyatt Summerfield Suites brands are attractive midlevel options

with select service for small-business travelers who don't necessarily need to be in the heart of the city. Value-added amenities include a complimentary breakfast option and free parking at most locations.

Hyatt's Andaz brand offers a high-caliber boutique-style experience, with smaller properties that emphasize local culture, décor, history and cuisine. Personalized check-in service (versus the traditional check-in desk) provides an intimate experience akin to being welcomed to a home.

Best Western

Say Best Western and most people think of a roadside inn (picture the annual family minivan vacation). However, as of February 2011, Best Western has introduced "product descriptors" that break the traditional brand into three levels of accommodations and service: Best Western, Best Western Plus and Best Western Premier. The descriptors distinguish the categories of accommodation so guests know what to expect and can select the category and specific property that best suits their travel needs and budget.

Best Western provides great value and service, with features such as available breakfast and free high-speed Internet. Convenient amenities like these, and warm, comfortable surroundings, ensure an effortless stay and a reliable hotel experience.

Best Western Plus offers the same features as Best Western, with upgraded bath amenities in case you forgot anything, an in-room mini-fridge for keeping drinks and snacks on hand, a fitness room to help you stay fit even when you're on the road and affordable onsite laundry service.

Best Western Premier offers all the features of the other two levels, along with plush amenities, stylish décor, on-site dining and features that provide a refined level of comfort for all travelers.

"Costco member savings apply at all participating properties in each level," says Sarah. [E]

The Costco Connection

Costco members save at an array of participating Hyatt and Best Western properties. Plan your travel and book online in the Travel section of Costco.com, or call Costco Travel toll free at 1-877-849-2730.

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Costco introduces Kirkland Signature bourbon

BOURBON WHISKEY IS widely regarded as America's greatest contribution to the world of spirits. Its origin dates to American pioneers, and it was even produced by founding father George Washington at Mount Vernon. Bourbon was a whiskey-making county in Kentucky; it was named for the French royal family, the house of Bourbon, in gratitude to France for helping America in its fight for independence.

To separate it from all other whiskey, bourbon was recognized by Congress in 1964 as "a distinct product of America." Now all bourbon must be produced in accordance with a strict formula to meet that standard. It must be made of a grain mixture that is at least 51 percent corn, distilled in America at less than 160 proof with nothing added but water, and aged for at least two years in new charred-oak barrels. All bourbon must also be labeled with an age statement if the product is aged less than four years.

Some bourbon producers are expanding on this formula in smaller batches with addi-

tional aging and varying proofs, which are commonly labeled "small-batch bourbon." The resulting taste profile is smoother and more complex, and made for sipping. As the name suggests, small-batch bourbons are made in limited quantities and typically aged from six to nine years to acquire intense flavors and aromas from the new charred-oak barrels.

Costco is proud to introduce Kirkland Signature™ Premium Small Batch Bourbon, available in select warehouses in states that allow retail liquor sales. Distilled and bottled in Kentucky, it's aged seven years and bottled at 103 proof to achieve a complex balance of taste and flavor.

This impeccably aged bourbon is dark amber in color and features toasted oak with deep brown notes of rich caramel and molasses, with a long, smoky finish of sweet spice.

Try bourbon neat or on ice, as an aperitif or after dinner, or mix it with ginger ale for a classic cocktail.

—Romar Nichols,
Costco assistant spirits buyer



FRANCE FREEMAN

The Costco Connection

To see which Costco locations carry the new Kirkland Signature Premium Small Batch Bourbon (Item #888863) and other spirits, go to Costco.com, click on "Costco Connection Magazine" and then on "Beer, Wine & Spirits Locator" in the "Resource Guides" box.

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Service, value, savings

Behind the wheel of the Costco Auto Program

By T. Foster Jones

AN AUTOMOBILE IS a complex piece of machinery. For most of us, that complexity can be ignored, as the efforts of designers, builders and technicians have made it possible to simply turn on the ignition and drive.

The Costco Auto Program (CAP) is also a complex operation. Similarly, the efforts of those involved in the program have made it possible for Costco members to show up at a dealership and make a car purchase as simply as possible.

I recently had the opportunity to take a look behind the scenes, or, more appropriately, under the hood, of CAP, with some of the 125-plus employees who make up the program.

Nuts and bolts

The basics of CAP, which began 20 years ago, involve establishing relationships with top-rated dealers of most vehicle makes and models, in order to provide Costco members with low, prearranged pricing within a convenient distance of every Costco warehouse in the United States.

"The selection of individual dealers is based on very specific criteria to ensure the dealerships are in line with our program standards," says John Gleason, Costco's manager of the program.

Participating dealerships must agree to meet strict pricing requirements, consistently rank high in customer satisfaction scores and be able to ensure that select dealership representatives (certified and trained Authorized Dealer Contacts) follow specific processes to assist Costco members.

"First, we need to identify who would be best suited for dealing with Costco members," says Rick Borg, vice president of program operations for the Costco Auto Program. "It has to be someone with over-the-top service skills."

At the dealerships, these contacts are trained and certified by Costco's field reps, to follow established CAP processes. "Contacts commit to providing a first-class member experience and ensure a no-pressure, no-obligation buying process," says John.

"We sit down and intensively train these contacts face to face," says Rick. "And the field reps are constantly working with them. We don't just sign them up and forget about them."

Smooth handling

Whether a member has contacted CAP through the call center or via Costcoauto.com, member service steers the way.

"We provide auto-buying specialists who handle call center inquiries and who can explain the program in step-by-step detail," says John. "They can also help the member locate the participating dealer closest to the member."

In addition, the Costco Auto Program contacts all members who requested a referral to a dealer through the program, regardless of

Connecting

For more information about the Costco Auto Program, visit Costco.com and search CAP12, or call toll-free 1-800-458-1692.

Costco does not sell vehicles or negotiate individual transactions. Members must go to a participating dealer.

whether they purchased a vehicle, to evaluate their experience.

"We want to make sure we're meeting our members' expectations," says John. "It's only by talking to our members that we can continue to make the program even better."

Shock absorbers

No ride is without bumps. For those unexpected potholes or roadblocks, Costco has established a Member Advocacy Group (MAG) to smooth things out.

"The Member Advocacy Group is unique in the auto-buying industry," says John. "This group is available to assist members before, during and after they purchase or lease. If any questions or concerns should arise, this group ensures that the members' concerns are resolved."

"The MAG really sets Costco's program apart," says Rick. "There is no other program in the industry that has anything like this."

These highly trained member-service professionals work with Costco members to help them select their car, perform price verifications (to make sure the member got the Costco deal) and resolve any issues with the dealer or the vehicle after the transaction is complete.

And, says John, "We have also established other mechanisms to ensure the program is running correctly."

These include both "competitive shopping," in which Costco reps research the competition and compare vehicle pricing within specific markets, and "shadow shopping."

"The shadow shopper conducts mystery shops of our dealerships to make sure the dealer is in compliance with our program, confirm correct pricing and evaluate the customer service provided by our Authorized Dealer Contacts," says John.

Horsepower

Driving all this forward is the 125-person piston engine that makes up the Costco Auto Program.

"The Costco Auto Program has helped more than 1 million Costco members purchase a car within the past five years," says Rick. "It is the most successful program in the industry, because it's a win for everybody. It's a win for dealers, because they are selling more cars. And it's a win for Costco members, because they are getting low, prearranged Costco member pricing—the best in class and the best in market for every model."

Bumper to bumper

"With the Costco Auto Program, our goal is to provide exceptional value and service, from start to finish," says John. "We have an established buying process, coupled with value pricing, trained staff and 20 years' experience to ensure that goal is met. We really work hard to make this as simple as possible for our members." □

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* 205 Sport is the number one selling sterndrive bowrider 20 feet and over for the 2010 model year per Statistical Surveys Inc.

** Costco and its affiliates do not sell boats or negotiate individual transactions. All new boats arranged for sale are subject to availability and a price prearranged with the participating new boat dealer. Offer only available on eligible models at participating dealers. Additional details apply. Must complete a Redemption Form and Costco Auto Program Member Satisfaction Survey within 30 days of purchase to qualify for the \$500 Costco Cash Card.

Pat chills out in the cooler that keeps Costco's roses at the perfect 35° temperature.

Beautiful bloomers

Costco's
flower
program
blossoms

JOHN VALLS PHOTOGRAPHY

BuyingSmart

Consumer reporter **Pat Volchok** gives a behind-the-scenes look at Costco products and services. Send your questions about this article to: buyingsmart@costco.com.

A ROSE IS A ROSE, right? Not so fast. Some roses are sustainably grown, supported by a commitment to protect ecosystems and wildlife habitats, conserve water and soil, and promote decent and safe working conditions. These certified beauties, known as Rainforest Alliance roses, are now the only long-stemmed roses offered in Costco warehouses.

A new standard of floriculture

Wanting to learn more about this latest development, I sit down with Costco's warehouse floral team: Kim Thomas, Kevin Gleason and Ken Hackman.

Kim tells me, "Costco was the first retailer in the country to commit to only selling sustainably grown long-stemmed cut roses. This assures the company and Costco members that the beautiful flowers they purchase in the warehouse are not causing harm to the people who grow them."

The team analyzed many sustainability certification programs before selecting the Rainforest Alliance (www.rainforest-alliance.org). Particularly appealing was the requirement of annual, independent third-party audits. In addition suppliers cannot earn the nonprofit's green frog certification seal without performing agrochemical reduction, eco-

system conservation and fair worker practices, including equitable wages, decent housing and access to schools, healthcare and training.

I'm struck by the magnitude of managing a program whose farms are located in tropical Latin America. (Ninety percent of the cut flowers and ferns imported to the United States originate in this region.)

Kim's eyes well up as she reports, "I've never been more proud. A vast majority of our suppliers and their farms exceeded Rainforest Alliance certification standards the first go-around. This speaks to the caliber of the people we deal with."

Rainforest Alliance sustainable value chain manager Alex Morgan concurs. I catch up with him as he is off to visit Costco Rainforest Alliance Certified floral farms in Colombia, and he e-mails an update.

"Pat, it seems that everyone in the industry in Colombia knows that Costco has been quite diligent about the farms it is sourcing from and clearly values how these farms take care of the environment, people working on the farms, birds and wildlife," he writes.

Costco's commitment to Rainforest Alliance certification, he notes, is a "win-win for farms, farmers, buyers and consumers, with benefits for everyone in the supply chain."

More in archives
On Costco.com, enter
"Connection." At Online
Edition, search
"buyingsmart."

Rose buddies

Kevin suggests I travel with him to Canby, Oregon, to experience a production facility and see firsthand the difference between farm-made and Costco-made bouquets. I jump at the chance.

We are met by Kendal Floral Supply president Ken Baca. With 1,500 varieties, 104 of which are Rainforest Alliance Certified roses, Kendal is the second-largest importer and distributor of fresh cut flowers in the United States, and accounts for 25 percent of all Costco warehouse cut flowers.

Their facility (pictured at left) takes my breath away in more ways than expected. The Rainforest Alliance Certified roses, in a rainbow of colors, beg me to take them home. But it's the chilly temperature, held at a constant 35 degrees Fahrenheit inside the plant, that grabs my attention.

Ken Baca explains, "Flowers age about three times faster at warmer temperatures; this is why Costco's cold chain is maintained from harvest to warehouse."

I'm shown photos of flowers stored at 32 degrees for five days and then stored at 68 degrees. They had a life of 11.5 days, whereas those held at 50 degrees for five days and then at 68 degrees lasted only 7.0 days, a 39 percent decrease in vase life.

There's much more to learn

Costco specifies 50 cm (19.7-inch) long roses because stems are stronger and flower heads larger. Also required for most rose varieties are slightly open buds, as they continue to unfurl and hold better in the vase. Costco

sets a goal of two days from harvest to production facility and less than 48 hours from production facility to warehouse. (Some Costco warehouses receive deliveries daily.)

We walk through the plant. It mirrors what occurs on Rainforest Alliance Certified farms, with water and cardboard recycled and green waste composted.

Baca randomly opens boxes of flowers that have just arrived. They are magnificent, with strong stems, no droopy leaves and buds individually protected in sleeves.

I learn that vase life can vary from three days to three weeks based on variety, placement and handling. (In a quest for the perfect rose, breeders sacrificed fragrance for vase life; however, they are now working on having both.) For best results, follow the guidelines in "Surviving the first cut."

Baca ends our tour by noting, "Rainforest Alliance Certified roses are a symbol of pride for all of us. Costco's goal is to set the pace for our industry, and that is what we've done. Nobody touches Costco's price."

Costco's Rainforest Alliance Certified 50 cm, 24-stem rose bouquet with greens and rose food is \$15.99 (less than 67 cents per stem). A quick trip to my local grocery finds 50 cm roses offered at \$2.99 per stem (\$71.76 for 24) and certified fair trade roses at \$3.49 each (\$83.76 for 24).

I'd say Costco Rainforest Alliance Certified roses are bloomin' great. [M]

Blooms in bunches

SEASONAL MIXED BOUQUETS (about 30 stems) and garden bunches (single variety) are also sold in warehouses. Costco purchases local, U.S.-grown flowers whenever possible, including the majority of sunflowers, tulips, gladioli and iris. While not certified, these farms are pressed by Costco to perform within the same Rainforest Alliance standards.

The new special-order program makes it possible to order Costco flowers ahead of a wedding or other big function. Costco's supplier, Kendal Floral Supply, assigns a specific person to each order.

Kevin Gleason, floral buyer, provides the details: "There are minimums, and orders need to be placed seven business days prior to the requested arrival date at the warehouse of your choice. There are no special handling or shipping fees."

Look for the special-order phone number on a sign on the floral cooler or speak to the cooler merchandiser, warehouse duty manager or staff at the membership counter. (Not offered the two weeks before Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.)

You can also shop for flowers at Costco.com; click on "Grocery & Floral," and then on "Floral." Pre-made wedding ensembles, bulk flowers, roses and select Rainforest Alliance roses are particularly appealing. —PV

Surviving the first cut

WANT TO ENSURE those fresh-cut blooms will stay beautiful for as long as possible?

- As soon as you receive the flowers, empty the accompanying floral sachet into a vase of clean, fresh water.
- Using a sharp knife, cut the base of each stem at an angle before placing the flowers in water; this will ensure the flowers are rehydrated.
- Remove foliage below the water line to prevent bacteria buildup; retain foliage above to maintain plant health.
- Keep the flowers away from direct sunlight or indirect heat, including that generated from the top of appliances such as TVs.
- Every three days, change the water and recut the flower stems; if possible, add more flower food.

Roses at Costco are a bloomin' good value

Retailer	Stems	Length	Fillers	Greens	Retail Price
Giant*	12	50 cm	1	1	\$12.99
Whole Foods*	12	50 cm	0	0	\$19.99
BJ's	20	50 cm	0	0	\$14.99
Sam's Club	12	50 cm	2	3	\$10.87
COSTCO	24	50 cm	0	3	\$15.99



Price comparisons made on 1/31/11 in Washington, D.C., Virginia and Maryland. Configurations and price of all stems may vary due to shipping and availability. *Not Rainforest Alliance Certified.

EXCITING NEW PRODUCTS

What's new

ARRIVING SOON AT COSTCO

A. Sharp AQUOS Quattron 60" LED LCD Television

The Quattron LC-60LE832U features Quad Pixel technology which adds a fourth color, yellow, to the traditional RGB pixel format for an amazing color display. Quad Pixel Plus produces smoother lines by enabling individual control of all 8 million sub-pixels on screen. Connected TV services include Netflix, Vudu and even live customer support, and built-in Wi-Fi allows easy access to your home's network. Ultra-slim bezel around screen; 1.5" depth. Item #886060. **Warehouse and Costco.com.**

A



B. Gasland or Waste Land DVD *Gasland* is a provocative film about drilling for natural gas and the environmental impact to land, air and water. *Waste Land* features the world's largest garbage dump, Jardim Gramacho, located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, and the people who work there and create art from the refuse. Both films were nominated for Oscars in the 2010 Best Feature Documentary category. Item #569422. **Warehouse only.**

E



C. Insulated Beverage Tub

Perfect for parties and entertaining, this two-piece, 6-gallon tub features a double-wall design to eliminate condensation on the exterior of the tub and is BPA free. Item #557087.

Warehouse only.



I



F

G



J



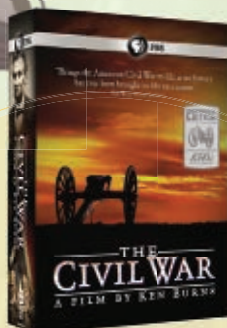
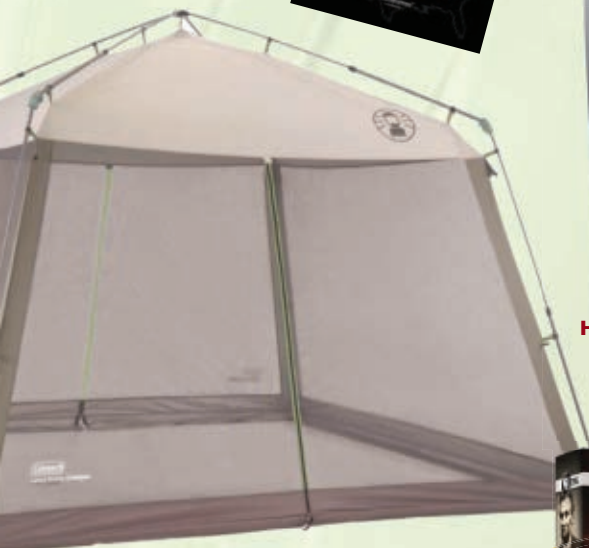
B



C



H



The Civil War on DVD

KEN BURNS' Emmy Award-winning, nine-part documentary series, *The Civil War*, is now available in the 150th-anniversary edition. Hailed as a landmark in historical storytelling, the epic documentary brings to life America's most destructive and defining conflict. "This masterpiece now includes a new sixth disc with bonus footage and a collector's book," says assistant buyer Cody Yaple.

Item #569545.
Warehouse only.



D

D. Women's Garden Gloves 6-Pack These nitrile-coated garden gloves are excellent for wet and muddy conditions. They have superb grip for weeding, handling bricks and stones, pondscaping and planting. Each glove features 100% nitrile coating. Pack features assorted colors. Item #532011. **Warehouse only.**

E. All-Occasion Gift Bag Set This set offers a variety of designs for every occasion, with 20 handmade, uniquely embellished gift bags in a variety of sizes. A Costco exclusive. Item #785785. **Warehouse only.**

F. Primo Portable Tabletop Water Dispenser This versatile water dispenser can be used in the kitchen, gym or workshop, and is easily portable for tailgating, picnics and sporting events. Includes a convenient push-button control. Fits most 3- to 5-gallon bottles (not included). Item #563229. **Costco.com only.**

G. Coleman Screen House This 11' x 11' instant screen house sets up in less than 60 seconds—simply unfold and extend. Shelter provides 100 square feet of shade and a UVGuard UV protection factor of 50+. Item #545537. **Warehouse only.**

H. Sharp Portable Air Conditioner/Air Purifier This stylish, portable unit combines library-quiet cooling with the utility of a dehumidifier, exhaust fan and Plasmacluster air purifier. Cools rooms up to 410 square feet. Item #564359. **Warehouse only.**

I. Nintendo 3DS Bundle Experience incredible game play that combines 3-D graphics, with no need for special glasses, in a portable, handheld system. Includes executive case, car charger and two screen protectors. Available in Cosmo Black or Aqua Blue. Item #589999. **Warehouse and Costco.com.**

J. Geneva Cuddle Set This three-piece wrought-iron set includes two oversize cuddle chairs and a side table. The 24" tabletop is travertine, while the chair cushions feature Sunbrella fabric that resists mildew, stretching and fading. Pillows included. Item #541881. **Warehouse only.**

inside costco special events

Dates and events are subject to change. Special Events for other regions may be found on Costco.com; type "special events" into the search box.

New and exciting products available at warehouses for a limited time only

Click [here](#) for a list of special events by region.

ALASKA

Anchorage

Apr 28-May 8 Lucky Clover jewelry
Apr 29-May 8 Modesty apparel
Anchorage II
Apr 1-10 Lucky Clover jewelry
Apr 29-May 8 Modesty apparel

Juneau

Apr 14-23 Vitamix blenders

IDAHO

Boise

Apr 29-May 8 Roma Designs jewelry

Pocatello

Apr 8-17 Telesto Designs jewelry
Apr 15-24 Modesty apparel

Twin Falls

Apr 29-May 8 Vitamix blenders

MONTANA

Billings

Apr 8-17 Modesty apparel
Apr 29-May 8 Sun protection apparel

Bozeman

Apr 1-10 Vitamix blenders
Apr 29-May 8 Lucky Clover jewelry

Helena

Apr 29-May 8 Modesty apparel

Kalispell

Apr 1-10 Pottery Avenue hand-made Polish pottery
Apr 15-24 Artune jewelry

Missoula

Apr 1-10 Artune jewelry

OREGON

Albany

Apr 15-23 Roma Designs jewelry
Apr 15-24 Hammocks

Aloha

Apr 15-23 Vitamix blenders
Apr 15-24 Kazia Digo jewelry
Apr 29-May 8 Modesty apparel

Bend

Apr 1-10 Roma Designs jewelry
Apr 8-17 Modesty apparel
Apr 29-May 8 Vitamix blenders

Clackamas

Apr 29-May 8 Hammocks
Apr 29-May 8 Lucky Clover jewelry
Apr 29-May 8 Modesty apparel

Eugene

Apr 8-17 Sun protection apparel

Medford

Apr 15-24 Vitamix blenders
Apr 22-May 1 Adolfo men's apparel

Portland

Mar 31-Apr 10 Vitamix blenders
Apr 8-17 Pottery Avenue hand-made Polish pottery
Apr 22-May 1 Modesty apparel
Apr 28-May 8 Jewelry To Your Doorstep jewelry

Roseburg

Apr 14-24 Jewelry To Your Doorstep jewelry

Salem

Apr 8-17 Adolfo men's apparel
Apr 22-May 1 Sun protection wear

Tigard

Apr 28-May 8 Lucky Clover jewelry

Warrenton

Apr 6-10 Jewelry To Your Doorstep jewelry
Apr 29-May 8 Modesty apparel

Wilsonville

Apr 1-10 Modesty apparel
Apr 15-24 Hammocks
Apr 29-May 8 Kazia Digo jewelry
Apr 29-May 8 Vitamix blenders

UTAH

Murray

Apr 1-10 Modesty apparel
Apr 28-May 8 Lucky Clover jewelry

Ogden

Apr 8-17 Pottery Avenue hand-made Polish pottery

Sandy

Apr 15-24 Lucky Clover jewelry
Apr 22-May 1 Pottery Avenue hand-made Polish pottery

West Bountiful

Apr 8-17 Pottery Avenue hand-made Polish pottery
Apr 22-May 1 Telesto Designs jewelry

West Valley

Apr 22-May 1 Vitamix blenders
Apr 22-May 1 Pottery Avenue hand-made Polish pottery

WASHINGTON

Aurora Village

Apr 1-10 Adolfo men's apparel
Apr 29-May 8 Kazia Digo jewelry

Apr 29-May 8 Pottery Avenue hand-made Polish pottery

Bellingham

Mar 31-Apr 10 Vitamix blenders
Apr 15-24 Hammocks

Burlington

Apr 15-23 Roma Designs jewelry
Apr 29-May 8 Hammocks

Clarkston

Apr 1-10 Sun protection apparel

East Wenatchee

Apr 15-24 Modesty apparel

Everett

Apr 29-May 8 Artune jewelry
Apr 29-May 8 Modesty apparel
Apr 29-May 8 Vitamix blenders

Federal Way

Apr 1-10 Sun protection wear
Apr 8-17 Modesty apparel
Apr 15-24 Kazia Digo jewelry

Gig Harbor

Apr 8-17 Modesty apparel

Issaquah

Apr 28-May 8 Jewelry To Your Doorstep jewelry

Apr 29-May 8 Pottery Avenue hand-made Polish pottery

Kirkland

Mar 31-Apr 10 Vitamix blenders
Apr 29-May 8 Modesty apparel
Apr 29-May 8 Roma Designs jewelry

Lacey

Apr 15-24 Kazia Digo jewelry

Puyallup

Apr 6-10 Jewelry To Your Doorstep jewelry

Seattle

Apr 15-24 Sun protection wear
Apr 29-May 8 Lucky Clover jewelry

Sequim

Apr 1-10 Roma Designs jewelry
Apr 29-May 8 Modesty apparel
Apr 29-May 8 Sun protection wear

Silverdale

Apr 1-10 Pottery Avenue hand-made Polish pottery
Apr 1-10 Sun protection wear
Apr 15-24 Adolfo men's apparel
Apr 29-May 8 Kazia Digo jewelry

Spokane

Apr 1-10 Sun protection wear
Apr 22-May 1 Modesty apparel
Apr 29-May 8 Vitamix blenders

N Spokane

Apr 8-17 Modesty apparel
Apr 15-24 Sun protection wear

Tacoma

Apr 14-24 Jewelry To Your Doorstep jewelry
Apr 22-May 1 Vitamix blenders
Apr 29-May 8 Sun protection wear

Tukwila

Apr 29-May 8 Roma Designs jewelry

Tumwater

Apr 1-10 Kazia Digo jewelry
Apr 1-10 Pottery Avenue hand-made Polish pottery
Apr 15-24 Sun protection wear
Apr 29-May 8 Adolfo men's apparel

Union Gap

Apr 8-17 Modesty apparel

Woodinville

Apr 1-10 Modesty apparel
Apr 29-May 8 Lucky Clover jewelry
Apr 29-May 8 Vitamix blenders

warehouse hours

Monday-Friday 10am-8:30pm
Saturday 9:30am-6pm
Sunday 10am-6pm
Costco.com open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Additional services
Costco Auto Program.
1-800-800-9288;
www.costcoauto.com
Fife and Lynnwood, WA, Business Centers, Print & Copy Center. Delivery to businesses, more business products.†
Open to all Costco members.
1-800-788-9968

specialty services

at your local warehouse or business center

ALASKA

	1-Hour Photo	Auto Program	Business Delivery	Carwash	Costco.com Kiosk	Gas Station	Hearing Aids	Ink Cartridge Refill	Optical	Print & Copy Ctr.	Service Deli
Anchorage	•	•	•			•	•		•	•	•
Anchorage II	•	•	•			•	•		•	•	•
Juneau											

IDAHO

	1-Hour Photo	Auto Program	Business Delivery	Carwash	Costco.com Kiosk	Gas Station	Hearing Aids	Ink Cartridge Refill	Optical	Print & Copy Ctr.	Service Deli
Boise	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Coeur d'Alene	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Nampa	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Pocatello	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Twin Falls	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•

MONTANA

	1-Hour Photo	Auto Program	Business Delivery	Carwash	Costco.com Kiosk	Gas Station	Hearing Aids	Ink Cartridge Refill	Optical	Print & Copy Ctr.	Service Deli
Billings	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Bozeman	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Helena	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Kalispell	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Missoula	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•

OREGON

	1-Hour Photo	Auto Program	Business Delivery	Carwash	Costco.com Kiosk	Gas Station	Hearing Aids	Ink Cartridge Refill	Optical	Print & Copy Ctr.	Service Deli
Albany	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Aloha	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Bend	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Clackamas	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Eugene	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Hillsboro	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Medford	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Portland	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Roseburg	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Salem	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Tigard	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Warrenton	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Wilsonville	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•

UTAH

	1-Hour Photo	Auto Program	Business Delivery	Carwash	Costco.com Kiosk	Gas Station	Hearing Aids	Ink Cartridge Refill	Optical	Print & Copy Ctr.	Service Deli
Lehi	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Murray	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ogden	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Orem	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
St. George	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Salt Lake City	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Sandy	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
West Bountiful	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
West Valley	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•

WASHINGTON

	1-Hour Photo	Auto Program	Business Delivery	Carwash	Costco.com Kiosk	Gas Station	Hearing Aids	Ink Cartridge Refill	Optical	Print & Copy Ctr.	Service Deli
Aurora Village	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Bellingham	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Burlington	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Clarkston	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Covington	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
East Wenatchee	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Everett	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Federal Way	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Fife Business Center	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Gig Harbor	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Issaquah	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Kennewick	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Kirkland	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lacey	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lynnwood Business Ctr.	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Marysville	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Puyallup	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Seattle	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Sequim	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Silverdale	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Spokane	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
N Spokane	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Tacoma	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Tukwila	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Tumwater	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Union Gap	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Vancouver	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
E Vancouver	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Woodinville	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Services at all locations (Except Fife and Lynnwood Business Centers)

ATM, Bakery, Deli/Produce, Executive Membership, Food Court or Hot Dog Cart, Fresh Meat, Pharmacy*, Special Order Kiosk and Tire Center

Costco Travel.† 1-877-849-2730

Costco Services. A suite of discount business and consumer services.† 1-800-220-6000

*Prescriptions available through Costco.com in Juneau, Kalispell and Warrenton

†Also available at Costco.com

COSTCO SERVICES

Update

To learn more about our complete suite of Costco services, click on the "Services" link at Costco.com or call toll-free 1-800-220-6000.



COMSTOCK

NEW SERVICE

Mortgage rates for members

COSTCO AND PROVIDER First Choice Bank have launched the new Mortgage and Refinancing service, dedicated to providing Costco members with great rates and excellent service for home-financing needs. This safe and secure online program lets you shop for a mortgage or refinance a loan with a select group of national lenders participating in the program.

It's simple to get a real-time rate quote

First Choice Bank, a New Jersey state-chartered bank, is registered or exempt from state licensing in the states where it originates mortgage loans. First Choice Loan Services Inc., a New Jersey corporation, is the wholly owned subsidiary of First Choice Bank. First Choice Loan Services Inc. is licensed, registered or exempt from state licensing in the states where it originates mortgage loans. First Choice Loan Services Inc. is licensed in Maryland as a Mortgage Lender and in the District of Columbia as a Mortgage Lender (License #MLB210764). The NMLS identification number for First Choice Loan Services Inc. is 210764. Costco and its affiliates do not negotiate, arrange or make mortgage loans. Only current Costco members are eligible to qualify for this service.

returned only from the lenders you select.

The good news for Costco members: Except for third-party fees such as appraisal, title, etc., Executive Members pay no more than \$600 in lender fees; Gold Star and Business members pay no more than \$750 in lender fees. (That's a great example of how a membership upgrade can pay for itself.)

To get started, visit costcofinance.com.

COSTCO SERVICES

Special Offers on Costco Services Valid 3/10/11 – 4/3/11

Go to Costco.com and search: Services mvm

Restrictions apply. See offers for details.



NEW SERVICE

EHR: Just what the doctor ordered

FOR MEDICAL PRACTICES and clinics, electronic health records (EHR) and practice management (PM) solutions are the focus of a new service that Costco is testing in the Southeast.

The EHR platform, Allscripts MyWay™, offers Costco members a fully hosted software and service solution with a full set of features that includes:

- Patient portal
- ePrescribing
- Unlimited electronic claims
- Live remote training
- Maintenance, support and hosting

Physicians utilizing EHR and proving "meaningful use" during 2011 are eligible for up to \$44,000 in federal stimulus incentives. Etransmedia, the provider, can show you how to qualify for that stimulus.

Costco Executive Members pay just \$499 per month for this service; Gold Star and Business members pay \$599 per month. No server hardware is required or included.

For more information or to schedule a free demo, call toll-free 1-877-347-8497, or visit Costco.com and search "EHR."

Eligibility requirements apply. Offer subject to terms and licenses in purchase and lease documentation. Subject to third party finance approval; lease terms apply. See www.etransmedia.com/costco-ehr for terms and conditions.

SERVICE EXPANSION

Vehicle protection now in five states

COSTCO HAS EXPANDED the Vehicle Repair Protection service provided by Century Warranty Services to Arizona, Florida and Texas in addition to Oregon and Washington.

Cars are expensive to repair, particularly when the factory warranty runs out. That's why this type of comprehensive repair protection makes sense and saves money.

Program benefits include:

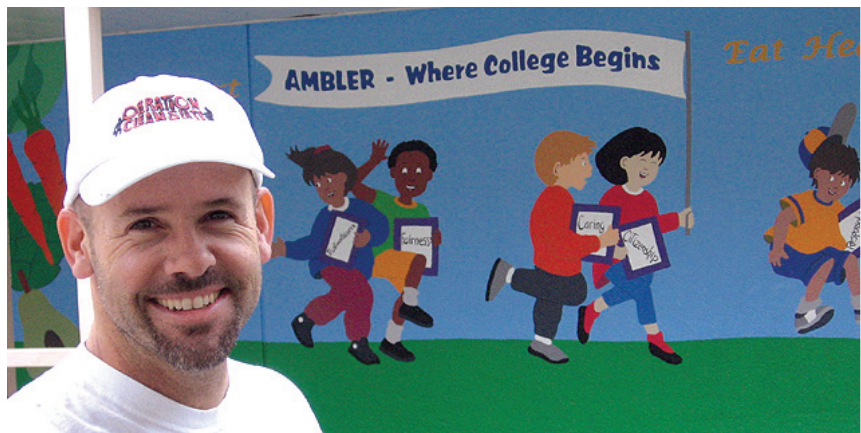
- Exclusive rates for Costco members
- A premium-level plan that covers most mechanical and electric components
- Various deductibles and plan terms
- Vehicle service at any licensed repair shop in the U.S. and Canada

Why not protect yourself from unexpected vehicle repair costs and other related expenses, such as roadside assistance, towing, rental car reimbursement, travel and lodging?

For more information or to get a quote, call toll-free 1-877-900-9077, or visit Costco.com and search "vrp3."

Vehicle Protection Plans are provided by Century Warranty Services Inc., 8019 Bayberry Road, Jacksonville, FL; License #60114. Certain eligibility criteria, conditions, restrictions, limits and exclusions apply.

All services are provided by third parties, may not be available in all areas and are subject to change without notice. Some restrictions apply. See "Services" at Costco.com for applicable terms and conditions.



OPERATION CLEAN SLATE

Operation Clean Slate



OPERATION CLEAN SLATE (www.OperationCleanSlate.com), a non-profit organization in southern California founded by Costco member Michael Howard, involves students in hands-on mural-painting activities that help beautify school campuses and reduce graffiti vandalism. At the same time, students learn about issues such as nutrition and exercise, anti-tobacco messages, pedestrian safety and water conservation.

"I started Operation Clean Slate while I was a teacher at the Juvenile Hall school in Orange County," says Howard, 46. "It's been my full-time job for about 18 years."

The inspiration for creating Operation Clean Slate came to Howard while he was driving to Los Angeles to visit his parents. "Along the freeway I noticed some graffiti off to my right. I'd seen graffiti lots of times,

but this time it spoke to me. It was as if I heard a cry for help."

As Howard looked into what communities were doing to address the problem he quickly discovered they were overlooking what he felt was an elemental question: why kids were doing graffiti in the first place.

"I figured if you address the root cause—that kids need to be creative, have their self-esteem nurtured and a safe place to express themselves and channel their energies into something positive that benefits the community—then you could reduce graffiti," he says.

To date 24,000 volunteers have completed more than 700 large-scale murals at 360 schools throughout Southern California as well as in Washington and Iowa, and produced five murals outside the U.S. in Kenya, Thailand, Mexico, Costa Rica and Peru.—*T. Foster Jones*

Healthy tomatoes are in the bag

NECESSITY IS THE mother of invention, they say, and that's certainly true for Costco member Linda Thwaite Peterson of Vashon Island, Washington. "In late April and early May [of 2010], I puzzled over how to protect my tiny, shivering tomato plants from the wettest, coldest spring on record." Taking Kirkland Signature™ Tortilla Chip bags, she installed one bag around each 4-inch tomato plant, placing tomato cages or stakes inside the bags to hold them open. As the photo shows, Peterson had a healthy crop, despite the cold and wind.

—Anita Thompson



Life is like a box of... trees?



WHAT IF EVERYONE could plant a tree from seed and start his or her own legacy?

That's the question that launched Portland, Oregon's Tree In A Box (www.treeinabox.com) in 1991. Founders Art and Kris Akins correctly reasoned that trees started from seed in the environment they would actually be growing in would acclimate and thrive.

"We thought it would be a fun business that we might do for two or three years. From the beginning, the kits have been popular, and since the advent of the Internet our sales have really taken off," says Kris.

Tree In A Box sells about a dozen tree seed varieties, including American elm, blue spruce, giant sequoia, sycamore and red maple.

"Our kits are designed to include minimal packaging, but they come with a 32-page booklet, which we feel is a real value and increases customer success [with growing]," says Kris. "Best of all, our kits are guaranteed. If you don't get a sprout, we'll send you a new kit."

Since its founding, Tree In A Box, which contributes a portion of its profits to tree planting and conservation groups, has sold more than 2.5 million tree kits to retail stores as well as for company promotions, wedding and party favors, stocking stuffers, educational programs and to offset carbon footprints.—*Will Fifield*



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